

PREFACE

This anthology was compiled for the Korean Film Council (KOFIC)'s English-language website to provide foreigners with a better understanding of and easier access to Korean films. It aims to meet the increasing demand for in-depth study of the Korean cinema, as more and more Korean films are exported into foreign markets. Various topics appropriate to the brief essay format best suited to the web were selected for the chapters on the ten different periods of Korean film history. Some topics are treated repeatedly in different periods, sometimes with different approaches. Eleven other important subjects were selected and discussed in separate chapters of their own. After selecting topics for different periods, thirty authors were carefully chosen. This anthology is a culmination of their efforts, as they went to so much trouble to read old documents, analyze old films (which are difficult to gain access to), and discuss the topics with many people. We believe the result captures the very essence of Korean cinema better than any other existing work.

Though the book covers Korean film history chronologically, it does not have a single consistent point of view, nor is it organized to be balanced. Rather, it shows the present and the past of Korean film history by emphasizing the achievements of Korean cinema. Each author has her or his own interpretation of each period and topic. Some focus on films and filmmakers, others on factual data, the relationship between genre and industry, or the discourse and images of public culture. This was not standardized in the editing process. Such differences were al-

lowed to persist in order to provide diverse points of view on Korean film history.

Second, the relationship between Korean cinema and society and its role within society were accentuated through subjects like the Korean film law, genres and discourses. By studying how films affect society, the social essence of a mass medium is discovered. The book is a comprehensive repackaging of the achievements of the Korean cinema, rather than redefining history or presenting a completely new point of view.

Third, the book embraces a wide base of readers from the general public to scholars. I hope the book proves interesting to all readers by providing a broad perspective on Korean film history and sometimes inspiring researchers with new ideas.

Research on Korean film history is making progress from the very basics, such as the research environment. The Korean Film Archive is making efforts to provide easier access to old Korean films, while compiling oral histories and documents from film industry veterans into research materials. With more research on the relationship between Korean modernity and popular culture from literature, theatrical plays, and architecture to comics, the underlying basis for understanding the historical and national ideological role of Korean cinema is becoming stronger.

However, research on Korean film history still requires stronger fundamentals. Above all, means of accessing primary sources must be extended, for example by discovering and restoring films. All the films made after 1997 are preserved thanks to the regulation that requires the presentation of a specimen copy to the authorities since 1996. However, not many films from before 1996 have been preserved. From 1919 to 1996, a total of 4,893 feature films were made (5,573 until 2005). However, only 39.1 per cent, or 1,915 films, are preserved. This preservation rate becomes lower as one tracks back into history. Only eleven films from the colonial period are with us today. History can never be totally objective, but is subjective according to the selection of factual data and the method of description. However, the history of the Korean cinema can be and must be told without the films themselves. If the public experienced the same history and films mediated it, then the history can be written on the basis of the contemporary background and social imagery.

Korean cinema is already more than a century old. As with the film histories of other countries, Korean film history has always been closely linked to the formation of modern society. Thus, Korean film history must be part of the same social and historical foundation that modern society is based on. In Korea, films were only an exotic spectacle when first introduced. Then, when Korean filmmakers had just started making films, they had to go through severe censorship during the colonial

period and various military governments. It has not been an easy journey for Korean cinema to grow into a world-renowned success story. It had to survive many external and internal threats and moments of crisis. It is natural that many people are eager to know how the domestic film market share soared from a mere 15.9 per cent in 1993 to 60 per cent in 2004, the box-office quadrupled over one decade, and such diverse films are made. The key to success has been creativity and powerful content, supported by the greatest accomplishment of the Korean film industry: the abolition of restrictions and censorship. There is also the common experience of national division and the history of dictatorship. Some foreign film professionals ask me what policy was required to achieve Korea's success. I always give them the same answer: if there is any restriction, abolishing it is a prerequisite, as freedom of expression is more effective than any other support. The history of the Korean cinema itself proves this.

During the past year of working on this book, the earliest feature film ever found—*Sweet Dream* (Yang Joo-nam, 1936) was discovered, *The Host* (Bong Joon-ho, 2006) set a new admissions record, and a reduction in the number of screen quota days was announced. Korean film history must be continuously re-written, not only because new data are discovered, but also because the way we look at the same factual data continues to change.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the thirty authors who participated in

the project, and advisers including Huh Moon-yung, Joo Jin-sook, Lee Yeon-ho and Shin Kang-ho. I also give my special thanks to my co-editor An Jae-seok, Communication Books and Um Jin-seop, Lee Soon-jin, the president of Sodo Books who provided some of the photos, and An Cheong-sook, Chairperson of KOFIC who showed deep interest in this project. I would like to also thank the copy editor Professor Chris Berry. This book was also published in South Korea as *한국영화사 : 開化期에서 開花期까지*. I hope it will promote better understanding of Korean cinema and lay a foundation for future research on Korean film history.

2006

Kim Mee hyun

STYLE GUIDE

1. The Korean film titles and their production years in this book are based on the Korean Movie Database KMDb (www.kmdb.or.kr) and those of foreign films on the Internet Movie Database IMDb (www.imdb.com). However, when these databases differ from the 2000~2005 Korean Film Council (KOFIC) data on the English titles of films or the documents of the day, this book uses the KOFIC data and the documents of the day. Furthermore, when the film title had been mistranslated into English by KMDb, we have tended to restore its original meaning. The book italicizes film titles and includes the production year and the director's name in parentheses after the title on first appearance e.g. *Dial 112 for Murder* (Lee Man-hee, 1962)

2. Transcription of Proper Nouns

1) Names of people

- KOFIC data has been used to spell the names of directors whose films were released between 2000 and 2005, and the official spellings in the case of the presidents' names.
- We have followed the spelling in the KMDb when the name has been recorded there.
- We have followed the most common way of spelling Korean names, if no other spelling is found in either the KOFIC or the KMDb data.

2) Place names

- This book follows the 2000 Revised Romanization of Korean except for those spellings made official before the year 2000.

e.g. 부산 (Busan), but 부산국제영화제 (Pusan International Film Festival)

3) Names of newspapers and periodicals

- These are romanized according to common usage, with type of publication added for clarification, e.g. *Younghwa Segye* magazine

4) Names of organizations, committees, associations

- We follow the spellings of their official titles. If they do not have an English title, we have sought out the the best translation possible.

5) Other proper nouns

- Standard romanizations are used. If necessary, we include their meanings in parentheses, e.g. Yushin (revitalizing reform) regime

3. All the photographs in this book are part of the KOFIC collection, or collected from the internet and the assistance of Lee Soon-jin, President of Sodo Books.

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01

The Exhibition of Moving
Pictures and the Advent of
Korean Cinema

1897~1925

The Exhibition of Moving Pictures

Until popular moving pictures made their appearance, the competition to create new things to watch was unremitting. However, centuries of technological developments combined with the human desire for recreation and changes in the social environment to produce one of the indispensable resources of modern civilization—the “moving pictures.” *The Cinématographe* invented and displayed by Louis and Auguste Lumière in France was the culmination of corrections and improvements to a series of moving image technologies. It was a versatile device, handling photographing, developing and projecting. This remarkable innovation was not only smaller and lighter than Thomas A. Edison’s Kinetoscope (invented in 1894), but also allowed a larger number of people to watch at the same time.

The Lumières’ programs of films including *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* caused a sensation among the audience, who spoke of “living, moving pictures.” It spread around the world like wildfire. Britain imported these moving pictures first. It took them only two months to cross the Dover Strait and land in London after their first commercial exhibition in the Salon Indien of the Grand Café on Paris’s Boulevard des Capucines. The London showing began on 20 February 1896, then they went on to screen in Russia on 17 May, The United States on 29 June, and Cuba on 24 January 1897. They were also shown in Asian countries, such as India on 7 July 1896, China on 11 August, and Japan on 15 February 1897.

It has been commonly believed on the basis of archives of advertisements for film screenings in *Hwangsung Shinmun* newspaper that moving pictures were introduced to Korea for the first time at the end of June 1903. However, related documents and testimonies, and the commercial and geopolitical relationship with Japan tell a different story—moving pictures were imported around 1897 or 1898 and certainly well before 1903. At that time, factual shorts called *actualités* (actualities) from Pathé and Gaumont dominated theaters in Korea. The audience, at first satisfied with the mere fact that the pictures

were moving, began to ask for more. A less than ten-minute reel of film with a simple plot and plain techniques could no longer attract people. Therefore, fictions with cinematic tricks started appealing to audiences through the efforts made by early pioneers like Georges Méliès and D. W. Griffith.

Kino-drama Accompanies Actualities

There were two routes for moving pictures to gain popularity with the public. In the film exporting countries, it was invention, production, and then distribution, whereas in the importing countries, it was import, production, and then distribution. The latter was a passive process led by foreigners. Examples included India, China and Korea. Korean society at that time felt a strong need to open up to the world, but its rigid Confucianism hampered the creation of a welcoming environment for modern Western culture. Opening the country was a rising tide nobody could hold back. Until the 1920s, imported films were dominant in Korean movie theaters. Some 2,570 were screened during the twelve years after 30 August 1910, when advertisements appeared in the *Maeil Shinbo* newspaper. In 1919, as many as 218 films were imported, marking a high point for foreign films.

The Korean audience's taste changed over time. They preferred fictions such as *The Scenery South of Marseilles* (which screened at Youkwang-kwan Theater in 1912) and *Heolhasisan*, a movie about the Russo-Japanese War (which screened at the theater in Hwanggeum-yuwon Park, 1913) over actualities. Among the hit movies were Francis Ford's western series called *The Broken Coin* (Woomi-kwan Theater, 1915), D. W. Griffith's *Way Down East* (Daejung-kwan Theater, 1922), and Abel Gance's *J'accuse!* (Dansungsa Theater, 1922). Enchanted with Western actors, the audience also sought satisfaction from new-school plays such as Hyeokshin-dan troupe's *The Twin Jade Pavilion* (1913), Moonsoosung troupe's *Youth* (1914), and Chwisungjwa troupe's *Autumn Moon* (1918).

In the run-up to the 1920s, Korea reached a turning point in realiz-

ing its dream of film production. This was the age of the kino-drama. Although it was not a complete form of film, this was a stage play with moving picture scenes of outdoor scenery. It imitated Japanese *shinpa* melodramas in style and content. On 27 October 1919, *Fight for Justice* was the first kino-drama, and it was produced and put on the stage at Dansungsa Theater by Shingeuk-jwa, a new drama group led by Kim Do-san. The modern look of the kino-drama, with its combination of two genres, became popular nationwide. Unfortunately, it failed to maintain its popularity, because it diluted the uniqueness of each genre.

Despite this shortcoming, some twenty kino-dramas were produced up to the beginning of 1923, and they made a great contribution to the birth of Korean cinema. In light of the technical and financial restraints faced by the Korean cinema in those days, we can see that this was a good opportunity for new drama groups to try and break through the stagnation of Korean plays by borrowing from the novelty of the kino-drama. It should be noted that *Fight for Justice* was not the only Korean production Koreans watched in 1919. We must not forget that *The Panoramic View of the Whole City of Kyeongsung*, a short documentary film, was also screened on the same day. It not only complemented the half-baked kino-drama but also had unique significance in Korean Cinema.

Inherent Limits Caused by Reliance on Japan

It was 1923 when the first complete Korean feature film appeared. *The Border*, an action-drama directed by Won San-man, was quickly followed by *The Vow Made below the Moon*, an educational film by Yoon Baek-nam. Starring silent film narrators called *byunsa* in Korean (*benshi* in Japanese) and female entertainers called *gisaeng*, they caught the public's attention. Around the same time, *The Story of Chun-hyang* based on a Korean classic, by Japanese director Gosu Hayakawa (早川孤舟), was a hit. This provoked the owner of the Dansungsa Theater, Park Seung-pil, to create an in-house production

department and produce *The Story of Jang-hwa and Hong-ryeon* (Park Jung-hyun, 1924) based on a Korean classic, too. This film is historically significant as the first purely Korean feature film. On 11 July 1924, Chosun Kinema was founded in Busan and went into full operation. It had 200,000 won in capital, which had been raised by influential Busan residents including businessmen, lawyers and a Japanese medical doctor called Gato (加藤). Gancho Dakasa (高佐貫長, Korean name: Wang Pil-ryul) was appointed as Production and Managing Director and Yoon Baek-nam was made Chief of the Directing Department. Wang directed *The Sorrowful Song of the Sun* (1924) and Yoon directed *The Story of Un-yong* (1925), a tale about Prince Anpyong. *The Sorrowful Song of the Sun* was made by an all-Japanese crew, except for actors such as Ahn Jong-hwa and Lee Wol-hwa. It was a common melodrama about a tragedy over two generations of a family, involving a young man from the city who gets lost during his hike on Mount Hanra and falls in love with an island girl. This was the first Korean film shot with a Parvo camera made in France. Furthermore, many different locations around Seoul, Daegu, and Mount Hanra and Seogwipo on Jeju Island were used. However, the film was not a success in Korea, in contrast to the welcome it received from the Japanese audience when it screened at the Osaka Kinema Society on 16 October 1924. It received barbs from critics such as Lee Ku-young, writing in his column, "Impressions of Chosun Cinema," that, "Considering its story, *The Sorrowful Song of the Sun* has a good oxymoronic title but tickles the fancy of young men and women with cheap sentimentalism" (*Maeil Shinbo* newspaper, 1 January 1925). Despite such attacks, Chosun Kinema's first movie racked up a profit of 3,000 won. The company was dissolved after releasing four movies in total, including *Am Gwang* (Wang Pil-ryul, 1925), the title of which was changed after censorship, and *A Hero in a Small Village* (Yoon Baek-nam, 1925).

Yoon Baek-nam departed Chosun Kinema prior to its collapse and opened the first independent film company, Yoon Baek-nam Pro-

ductions in Seoul. He hired Lee Kyung-son, an assistant director at Chosun Kinema, to direct *Story of Shim-chung* (1925), but it was Na Woon-kyu who took the spotlight in this film. Na Woon-kyu, a 25-year-old novice actor, played the role of Shim-chung's blind father in middle age. This happened only two months after he made a brief appearance as an extra in *The Story of Un-yong*. Na, once a nobody, leapt into the leading role in a single bound. He later achieved immortality with *Arirang* (1926).

Before moving on to the next topic, we need to ask how we should judge those early Korean films that were initiated by Japanese filmmakers. So far, film history has accepted these movies without discerning their lineage. The situation was unavoidable, because Korea was a weak and small country under Japanese rule, closed off from the outside world, and forced to be dependent on the Japanese in almost all areas. We were one of many countries relying on help from foreigners. Russia, Spain, Mexico, Australia, Finland, the Philippines, and Indonesia made their first films with the assistance of either early pioneers such as the Lumière Brothers from France (which had the most advanced film industry), other imperial powers, or neighboring countries that introduced foreign films earlier than them. I believe that the universal characteristics of film and the place in which the filmmakers resided should be taken into account in considering such matters. In other words, if the filmmakers based themselves in Korea and made films for Korean audiences, even though they were Japanese the movies they made should be classified as part of Korean cinema. By this logic, *Patriotism* (Jung Ki-tak, 1928) and *The Yangtze* (Lee Kyung-son, 1930), made in Shanghai, as well as Shin Sang-ok's *A Chronicle of Escape* (1984), made in North Korea, and *3 Ninjas Knuckle up* (1995), made in Hollywood, cannot be considered Korean films. Therefore, we should keep an eye out for jingoism when it comes to film production.. (Kim Jong-won)

Exhibition of Moving Pictures

It is generally accepted that moving pictures were introduced to Korea in 1903, based on advertisements for them in the 23 June 1903 issue of the *Hwangsung Shinmun* newspaper. The advertisement reads: “Moving pictures of wonderful city scenery in Korea and Europe, screening now at the machine warehouse of Dongdaemun Electronic Company. Hours: 8:00~10:00 p.m., except for Sundays and rainy days. Price: 10 *jun*.” Dongdaemun Electronic Company was another name for Hansung Electronic Company, founded by two Americans, Henry Collbran and Harry Bostwick, under the direction of Emperor Gojong. It contributed to Korea’s modernization by laying rails for streetcars from Seodaemun to Cheongnyangni and for trains from Incheon to Noryangjin.

If the advertisement is correct, it means that it took six years for Korea to import foreign films after they were first introduced to Japan. Considering Japan’s immense economic influence over Korea and geographical proximity, this is unconvincing. Moreover, the ever-increasing number of Japanese living in Seoul after 1894 made this a time when interest in new gadgets from the West was increasing. This indicates that moving pictures must have been introduced to Korea earlier than 1903.

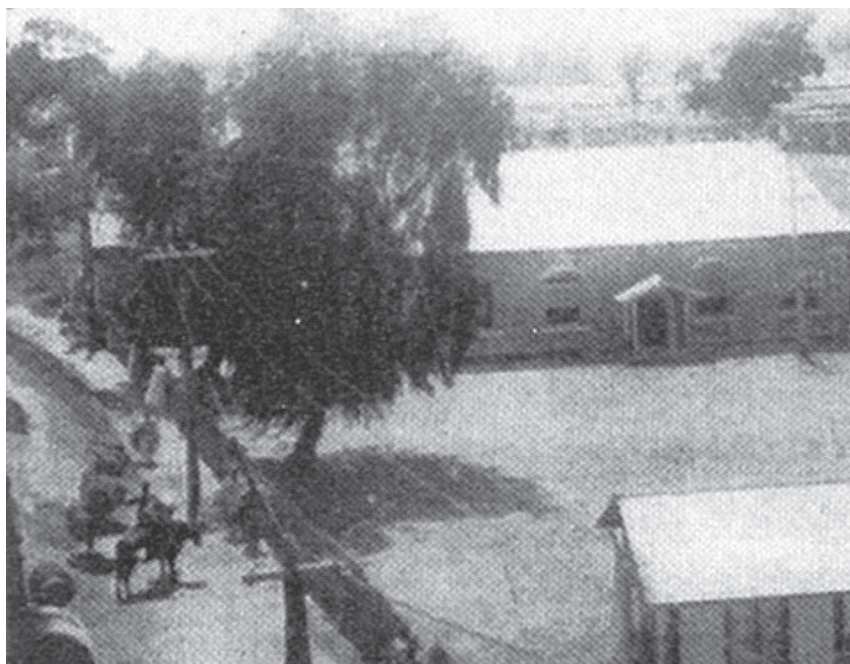
An editorial of the 14 September 1901 edition of the *Hwangsung Shinmun* newspaper provides evidence supporting this claim. The writer mentions some moving pictures of marching soldiers probably taken during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, enviously asking when Koreans might make such magic pictures.

On the premise that moving pictures were first imported to Korea in 1897, Shim Hoon, a writer and director, claimed in an article in the 1 January 1929 edition of *Chosun Ilbo* newspaper that the first screening of some short documentary films was done for a Japanese audience at Bonjung-jwa, a small barracks below Mount Namsan in Seoul.

One year after this first screening, a Frenchman running a business outside Seodaemun filmed some scenes of passengers getting on and off a streetcar, white-water rafting, and so on, and projected them on a screen using gas lamps at a warehouse near Namdaemun.

In addition, Fred H. Harrington, who went on to become a president of the University of Wisconsin, wrote in his 1937 doctoral dissertation at New York University that moving pictures were already introduced to Korea at some point around the 17 October 1898 inauguration of construction on a single line of rails between Seodaemun and Hongreung. He also mentioned that Collbran and Bostwick, who were in charge of the construction, hired acrobats and installed a theater to boost the morale of their workers.

Others who also believe the first public screening of moving pictures was around 1897 or 1898 include Son Wi-bin, author of the 28 May 1933 *Chosun Ilbo* newspaper article, “Chosun Cinema History: Changes over a Decade,” Sai Ichikawa (市川彩), author of the 1940 book, *The Creation and Construction of Asian Cinema* (アジア映畫 創造 及 建設), Kim Jung-hyuk, author of the March 1946 article “Chosun Cinema History” published in *Inmin Pyungnon* magazine, and Lee Ku-young, author of the June 1970 article “Behind the Scenes of the Korean Cinema” published in *Younghwa Segye* magazine. Lee Ku-young, who was the Public Relations Manager of Dansungsa Theater in the mid 1920s and later became a film critic and director, lent particular credence to the claim by testifying that he had heard a Japanese saying some Japanese watched moving pictures at a Honmachi-jwa (本町座, a.k.a. Bonjung-jwa) at Jingogae in 1897. Putting together all these pieces of evidence, it is fair to conclude that moving pictures made their Korean debut in the late 19th century, well before 1903. (Kim Jong-won)



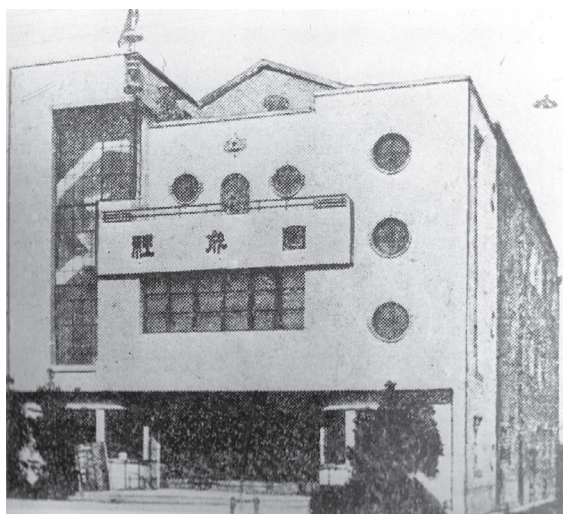
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- 1, Dongdaemun Moving Picture Venue
- 2, Kim Do-san
- 3, Yoon Baek-nam
- 4, Dansungsa Theater rebuilt in 1935

The Establishment of Permanent Theaters

In 1906, the first permanent theater appeared when the machine warehouse of Hansung Electronic Company was named the “Dongdaemun Moving Picture Venue.” When moving pictures were first screened there in June 1903, newspaper advertisements vaguely mentioned, “moving pictures screening at a machine warehouse of Dongdaemun Electronic Company,” (*Hwangsung Shinmun* newspaper, 23 June 1903) and “moving pictures showing at a warehouse of Hansung Electronic Company” (*Mansebo* newspaper, 26 July 1906). In 1906, however, the official name, Dongdaemun Moving Picture Venue, which became familiar to movie fans, was bestowed on it.

The number of theaters grew rapidly over the next seven and eight years. Theaters located south of the Cheonggye River were Songdo-jwa (1906), Uhsung-jwa (1908), Kyeongsung-jwa (1908), Kyeongsung Supreme Entertainment Theater (1910), and Hwanggeum-kwan (1913). To the north were Gwangmudae (1907), Dansungsa (1907), Jangansa (1908), Yeonheungsa (1908), and Woomi-kwan (1915). In Incheon there was Kabuki-jwa.

The theaters to the north targeted Korean audiences. Those with names ending in “jwa (座)” to the south, such as Uhsung-jwa in Namdaemun and Kyeongsung-jwa in Chungmuro, were based in Japanese commercial and residential areas.

The Gwangmudae (1907~1930) took over the location of Dongdaemun Moving Picture Venue and was run by Park Seung-pil from September 1908. At first, it screened movies, but before long it was given over exclusively to old theatrical plays. The Jangansa in Tongui-dong, Jongno-gu, focused more on traditional musical and dance than moving pictures, because of spatial limitations.

On 17 July 1907, the Dansungsa, located in Sueun-dong, Jongno-gu, was founded by businessmen and influential people including Ji Myung-geun, Park Tae-il and Joo Soo-young. It concentrated on tra-

ditional plays and charity shows under theater president Lee Ik-woo's management until the 1910 Japanese annexation of Korea. After opening, it went through various management crises compounded by a fire, and at one time was run by a Japanese businessman, named Damura (田村). But once Park Seung-pil, who was the owner of Gwangmudae, took over Dansungsa, it returned to normal and began to become established as a permanent theater. The new management began to revitalize the theater by bringing narrators such as Seo Sang-ho, Kim Duk-kyung, and Lee Byung-jo over from the Woomi-kwan and showing famous foreign films such as *Les Misérables* (1913) and *The Broken Coin* (1915).

The Kyeongsung Supreme Entertainment Theater conveyed the impression that it was far more advanced than those mentioned above by showing off Pathé's newest equipment and advertising itself as one of the world's best moving picture theaters. Its two-storey wooden structure with six hundred seats changed programs every four days.

The former manager of Dansungsa, Damura, opened Hwanggeumkwan on Euljiro 4-ga. This was a two-storey concrete building with a large stage and almost one thousand seats. In 1917, it introduced *The Vengeance of Civilization*, a Japanese kino-drama, to Korean audiences, who knew little about the form, and drew much publicity by using large-scale advertisements to explain what it was.

In 1915, the Woomi-kwan, a two-storey brick building located in Gwancheol-dong, Jongno-gu, took over Kyeongsung Supreme Entertainment Theater. In 1928, it attracted crowds by presenting a sound film for the first time in the north of the city. The Korean-funded Chosun Theater was a descendent of Yeonheungsa. It played a key role as one of Korea's three largest theaters with Dansungsa and Woomi-kwan. Its three-storey building housed about one thousand seats, including special seating for families. It was also equipped with an elevator and a restaurant. (Kim Jong-won)

Fight for Justice and the Success of Kino-drama

Moving pictures imported from Japan became popular enough to eventually usher in Korea's own production. However, there was a unique transitional period when the moving pictures were made not in their own right but in order to buttress theatrical plays. As the resistance campaign against Japanese colonial rule gained momentum from the March 1st Independence Movement and spread throughout the nation, Kim Do-san's Shingeuk-jwa troupe premiered a kino-drama titled *Fight for Justice* at Dansungsa Theater on 27 October 1919. 1,000-foot moving picture inserts showing the outdoor scenery of famous places in Seoul—such as the Han River steel bridge, Jangchungdan, Namdaemun Station, and Noryangjin Park—were projected onto the backdrop against which actors were performing. This was the prelude to the birth of the Korean cinema. Japan, which created the genre, does not consider its first kino-drama, *The Female Samurai* (1908), as a film. However, Korea regards *Fight for Justice* as the starting point of Korean cinema because, whereas Japanese audiences had already seen several locally-made moving pictures such as *The Autumn Excursion* (1899)—a *kabuki* scene—prior to kino-drama, Koreans had not had any such experience.

Fight for Justice is an action kino-drama in eight acts and twenty-eight scenes about rewarding good and punishing evil. Song-san was born into a wealthy family but lost his mother at his early age and had a miserable youth. Discovering that his stepmother and her relatives are conspiring to kill him for his inheritance, he reluctantly punishes them. Even though this is a kind of blood-and-thunder drama, it is also in line with the *shinpa* melodramas that were popular in the 1910s, because it has a typical good-and-bad plot line, conflicts and confrontations on money between Song-san and his stepmother, and a happy ending. It was written and directed by Kim Do-san, starred Lee Kyung-hwan, Yoon Hwa, and Kim Young-duk, and was filmed by So-

nosuke Miyakawa (宮川早之助), a cinematographer from Tenkatsu (天活) Film Company. Kim Young-duk was famous as an *onnagata* (女形俳優) male actor specializing in female roles, and he became the talk of the town by playing the stepmother. Despite ticket prices running as high as one-and-a-half *won* for VIP seating, the show was a hit and ran for a whole month. This was partly because of a favorable newspaper report about “a tide of people flowing into the theater early in the evening” (*Maeil Shinbo* newspaper, 29 October 1919). Kim Do-san followed up with *This Friendship* (1919), *The Chivalrous Robber* (1920), *Gyungeunjungbo* (1920), *The Calling* (1920), and *Blue Sky* (1920), marking the age of the kino-drama.

Kim Do-san's real name was Kim Young-geun. He was born in Chungmuro, Seoul, and became a pupil of Lee In-jik, one of the originators of the new-style novel and a playwright. Acquiring knowledge and experience, Kim began to build up his own theater career by joining Im Sung-kyu's Hyeokshin-dan troupe in 1911. When Lee In-jik's Yesung-jwa troupe, an affiliate of Wongaksa Theater, disbanded, Kim put together his own troupe of about thirty actors, including some from Yesung-jwa, as well as Lee Kyung-hwa, Byun Ki-jong, and Kim Young-duk. He was twenty-six years old at the time. After presenting fusion dramas combining the Japanese old- and new-style plays, such as *Man of Valor*, *Galloper*, and *The Story of Jung Eul-sun*, he came to produce *Fight for Justice* after watching kino-dramas of the Japanese Sedonaikai (瀬戸内海) troupe. Kim Do-san produced seven kino-dramas, including the eight-act and thirty-scene work *This Friendship*, before he died of pleurisy during the night of 26 July 1921. (Kim Jong-won)

The Vow Made below the Moon: Fiction Films Begin with an Educational Film

The Vow Made below the Moon (1923) was an educational film sponsored by the Japanese Government-General of Korea. Two reels and 1,021 feet long, it was made to encourage savings. Although there is room for dispute, the film is generally regarded as Korea's first fiction film. Written and directed by Yoon Baek-nam, shot and edited by Hitochi Oota (太田同), and starring actors from Yoon's Minjung troupe such as Lee Wol-hwa, Kwon Il-chung, Moon Soo-il, and Song Hae-chun, *The Vow Made below the Moon* premiered at Kyeongsung Hotel in Seoul on 9 April. The story is about a brother and sister who make a vow below the moon to save money and restore the family fortune wasted by their uncle. Given its educational purpose, the film was shown free of charge to attract larger audiences.

The Vow Made below the Moon's status as the first Korean fiction film can be disputed because one or two other educational films were earlier. Many people probably acknowledged the existence of earlier disinfection campaign movies, but dismissed them as fiction films due to their poor quality. Among the indisputable evidence for an earlier educational film called *Demon in Life* (1920) is the 6 June 1920 issue in *Gyeonggi Dobo* newspaper, stating that "the Gyeonggi-do Provincial Office's Public Health Department has asked Chwisung-jwa troupe to make a two-reel film to help contain the cholera outbreak and screen it throughout the province" (cited in Kim Jung-hyuk's article "Chosun Cinema History," in the March 1946 edition of *Inmin Pyungnon* magazine). The film is about a scrupulously hygienic family that survives a cholera outbreak and another one without such awareness that suffers the consequences.

After 1920, there was a boom in educational films about topics ranging from hygiene, savings, home improvement, and paying taxes, to the use of electricity. They played at the Japanese Government-General of



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1. Lee Wol-hwa
2. *The Male* (Hong Kae-myung, 1928)
3. *The Big Grave* (Yoon Bong-choon, 1931)
4. Park Seung-pil

Korea and subsidiary organizations free of charge. In this way, films started out as a way of educating people. This pattern extended to documentaries such as *The State of Affairs in Chosun* (1919) and *Chosun Traveler* (seven reels, 1923), made by the Moving Picture Department of the Japanese Government-General of Korea.

The Vow Made below the Moon is not a full first Korean fiction film, but it is certainly significant, because it marked the debut of the prominent director, Yoon Baek-nam, one of the great pioneers of the early Korean theater and cinema. In 1912, 24 year-old Yoon organized Moonsoosung troupe together with Cho Il-Jae and staged the play Little Cuckoo at Wongaksa Theater. The year after, he established Minjung troupe and performed creative plays such as *Lighthouse Keeper* (1922), contributing to the new play movement. After joining Chosun Kinema in Busan, he directed *The Story of Un-yong* (1925) and discovered a diamond in the rough, the actor Na Woon-kyu. He founded Yoon Baek-nam Productions in Seoul and produced *The Story of Shim-chung* (1925), inaugurating the age of independent film productions. (Kim Jong-won)

Lee Wol-hwa, the First Korean Actress, and *Gisaeng* Actresses at Work

Lee Wol-hwa leapt to instant stardom playing the heroine in *The Vow Made below the Moon* at the age of eighteen in 1923. She was already renowned in the theatrical world as “the flower of Chosun troupes” and “the queen of entertainment.” In an age when women were not allowed to perform on the stage and men played female roles, she was one of a handful of actresses who succeeded in building a career. Ma Ho-jung of the Chwisung-jwa troupe and Kim So-jin of the Shingeuk-jwa troupe went on stage a little earlier than Lee. However, they stayed in plays and their fame cannot be compared with hers. She became the

focus of media attention with the premiere of *The Vow Made below the Moon* and was later cast in *The Sorrowful Song of the Sun* (Wang Pil-ryul, 1924), *An Ox without Horns* (Kim Tae-jin, 1927) and *Jina Street by Secret* (Yu Jang-an, 1928).

Lee played two roles in *The Sorrowful Song of the Sun*, a girl from Jeju Island who falls love with a young man, and also her own daughter. In *Jina Street by Secret*, she played San-wol, who is abducted to China and becomes a prostitute. In *An Ox without Horns*, she plays a woman living in penury as a maid. These roles moved from an unsophisticated and naive woman to an unrelenting woman coping with the rough and tumble of life. Such a progress was predictable from her stage performances. At the Towolhoe troupe, her performances as Katusha in Tolstoy's *Resurrection* (*Voskreseniye*) and as Carmen left a lasting impression and were acclaimed in newspaper articles that claimed, "she made Chosun's Nekhludoff and José laugh and cry" (*Donga Ilbo* newspaper, 19 July 1933) and "she played a femme fatale with irresistible charm" (*Chosun Ilbo* newspaper, 19 July 1937).

Lee was born in Yesan, Chungcheongnam-do. She lost her parents at an early age, and her life was full of ups and downs. Her real name, Lee Jung-sook, was most likely given by her adoptive parents. During the shooting of *Jina Street by Secret*, she registered as a *gisaeng* (female entertainer) at the Chosun Gisaeng Guild. This prefigured her retirement. She seems to have established a happy family with a rich Chinese man after moving to Shanghai, but she died tragically young at the age of thirty in Moji, Japan, at 1:00 p.m. on 18 July 1933.

The role of *gisaeng* in establishing silent film cannot be underestimated. In an age when men took most female roles, they opened the door for women to pursue careers in the cinema by performing female roles. *The Story of Chun-hyang* (Goshu Hayakawa, 1923) is the first movie in which a *gisaeng* appeared. The heroine, Han Ryong (real name: Han Myung-ok), was a famous *gisaeng* in Kaesong. *Gisaengs* who followed her include Moon Myung-ok in *The Sorrowful Song* (Goshu Hayakawa,

1924); Kim So-jin in *The Twin Jade Pavilion* (Lee Ku-young, 1925); Ryu Shin-bang in *The Male* (Hong Kae-myung, 1928) and *A Deaf, Sam-ryong* (Na Woon-kyu, 1929); Im Song-seo in *A Story of the Day after Arirang* (Lee Ku-young, 1930); and Ha So-yang in *The Robber* (Yoon Bong-choon, 1930) and *The Big Grave* (Yoon Bong-choon, 1931). Films starring *gisaeng* were popular for almost a decade. In particular, *Road to the Twilight* (Chun Han-soo, 1927) became the talk of the town for its full mobilization of Chosun Gisaeng Guild's *gisaengs*, including Kim Nan-joo and Kim Nan-ok. This Chosun Gisaeng Guild-produced movie set in a peaceful sea village is about the tragic love of an innocent girl. (Kim Jong-won)

The Story of Jang-hwa and Hong-ryeon and Producer Park Seung-pil

As commercial films came to the fore in the mid 1920s, the term “movies” took over from the more formal “moving pictures” in the public consciousness. This came about as increased imports of foreign films and the development of Korean film came together to drive the Korean film market. In 1921, the public were using “movie” much more often than “moving pictures.” Yet they coexisted for a while, for the images of “moving pictures” such as *The Broken Coin* (1915) and *Way Down East* (1920) left a deep impression.

In those days, the *byunsas* (silent film narrators) were stars. They were so popular that famous *gisaengs* were waiting outside for them after the show finished. Park Seung-pil, a show business genius, recruited top-class *byunsa* as soon as he took over the Dansungsa Theater. Park appointed Seo Sang-ho as chief *byunsa* and added Kim Duk-kyung, Kim Young-hwan, and Lee Byung-jo to the team. He also launched in-house productions with versatile Kim Young-hwan writing the screenplays. Behind this flurry of activity was a hidden agenda. Park was

provoked by the fact that the Japanese were the first to make a movie based on the Korean classic, *The Story of Chun-hyang*. He decided to produce his own film based on another Korean classic. To realize his ambition, he began to gather together both human and financial resources from across Korea. The first Korean-made, Korean-funded film, *The Story of Jang-hwa and Hong-ryeon* (1924), was born against this backdrop. Not only the producer, director, and actors, but also the rest of the crew, including the cinematographer, were all Koreans. Park Jung-hyun, later Park Seung-pil's successor, directed and Lee Pil-woo, who had shot the kino-dramas *A Truly Good Friend* (1920) and *Jang-hanmong* (1922), was the cinematographer. Jang-hwa and Hong-ryeon were respectively played by Kim Ok-hee and Kim Sul-ja, singers from Gwangmudae Theater. The role of governor went to Woo Jung-sik, Korea's first *byunsa*.

The movie was finished in three weeks during the heat of summer at a temple near Seoul. The two sisters Jang-hwa and Hong-ryeon are abused to death by their stepmother. Their ghosts appeal to the governor for revenge, which is granted in the end.

The movie was a great hit. The show was scheduled to run for a week from 5 September 1924 but was extended by two days thanks to continuous full houses. It attracted some 13,000 people in total. Despite the box-office success, it was not well received by critics. On 1 January 1925, a review by Lee Ku-young in *Maeil Shinbo* newspaper acknowledged "the excellence of the cinematography and the utmost efforts not to compromise the spirit of the movie as a collective art," but pointed out some evident mistakes made with props such as using winter bedding in a summer setting and actors standing like wax figures and making awkward facial expressions.

Park Seung-pil recognized the true value of moving pictures early and invested in the kino-drama *Fight for Justice* (1919). As a showman and producer, he was very aware of culture and had outstanding business skills. He showed his business ability by taking over Dongda-

emun Moving Picture Venue, Korea's first permanent movie theater, and transforming it into Gwangmudae Theater on 6 September 1908. However, he did not reach his prime until he began to work for Dansungsa Theater. In September 1914, he took over the management of the theater from Damura (田村) and rebuilt it as a movie theater, generously investing in domestic film production as well as introducing famous foreign films such as *Les Misérables* (1913), *The Broken Coin*, and Charlie Chaplin's *The Champion* (1915). (Kim Jong-won)

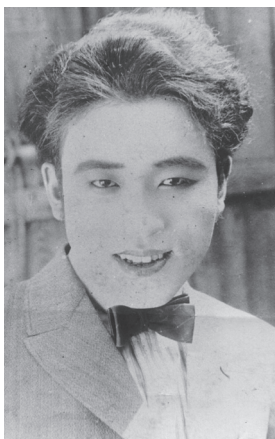
02

The Japanese Colonial
Period, Heyday of Silent Films

1926~1934



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- 1, *Airang* (Na Woon-kyu, 1926)
- 2, Na Woon-kyu
- 3, Lee Pil-woo
- 4, *Bloody Horse* (Hong Kae-myung, 1928)

A History of Films that no Longer Exist

In Korean cinema historiography, the time between the mid 1920s and mid 1930s is widely acknowledged as the heyday of silent films, and the following observations are based on this premise. However, this historic fact deserves our full attention because nobody currently studying Korean cinema history has ever seen the silent films made at that time. Only a few films stills have survived from this period, because of hardship, Japanese colonial rule, the Korean War, and the time of the military regime.

Despite this misfortune, the films made during this period can be discussed thanks to Lee Young-il, a Korean cinema historian. His *Korean Cinema History* (1969, revised 2004) and *Lee Young-il's Lectures on Korean Cinema* (2002) are essential reading for any domestic or foreign film scholar who wants a deeper understanding of Korean cinema.

According to the records, about 140-150 films were made during the Japanese colonial era, some eighty of which were released between 1926 and 1937. They were quite remarkable not only in quantity but also in quality. One has to go through piles of documents to try and bring these films back to life. Such efforts lead to research not simply on the value of these documents as records, but also on various historical aspects of the early Korean cinema in terms of technology, audience acceptance, controversy and legal issues, and industry.

The Characteristics of Korean Silent Films: The Conflict between Nationalism and Colonialism

There are two aspects to the battle between Korean nationalism and Japanese colonialism in the cinema. One is Na Woon-kyu's *Arirang* (1926), which surprised and thrilled the nation. The other is the political oppression and censorship exercised by the Japanese authorities. A newspaper report described Japanese film policy as "twisting the arm, severing the leg, and complete disorientation. You cannot tell what it was originally at all" (*Donga Ilbo* newspaper, 5 February

1928).

It is truly remarkable that a 26-year-old man's first film shook the whole nation, creating a huge milestone in Korean cinema. It is even more striking if you consider that Koreans only started making their own films nearly thirty years after Western films were introduced to Korea and Japan colonized Korea. Those films faced brutal censorship from the beginning.

What film to make was a fundamental question for early filmmakers venturing into the new world of cinema. As Lee Young-il observes, "There was a clear and uncompromising conflict between the Japanese and Chosun producers. The latter always tried to adopt national independence as the core value of their films and imbue them with Korea's unique sentiments and customs" (2002, p. 18). In the midst of this struggle, much hope for Korean Cinema was suppressed and crushed, which makes Korean film history different from that of others.

Na Woon-kyu made a breakthrough in the difficult situation. The main character of his film, *Arirang*, is a mad intellectual. The film was an answer to the search for a filmmaking style. People in those days considered *Arirang* as the first Korean film masterpiece, and it inspired many young people to enter the film business. A great number of silent films were produced in such a short period of time because the public's interest in film was growing. Interestingly, the heyday of the silent cinema ended with Na's death in 1937.

Controversial Issues in Korean Silent Films

Silent films of the time portrayed new types of people in Korean society. The public, who were facing drastic changes in the world, enthusiastically welcomed those expressing poignant sorrow in a melodramatic setting, known as *shinpa*. Some female characters in *shinpa* films abandoned Confucian ideology and were open to free love, divorce, and remarriage, defying the patriarchy that dominated society. The male elite, however, responded with a mixture of blister-

ing contempt and fear. The typical stories and formulaic characters of these melodramas have had a deep impact on Korean films and television dramas to this day.

In those days, socialism provided a common ideological basis for the independence movement among many of the educated elite. Its influence on the cinema resulted in the production of *The Wandering* (Kim Yu-young, 1928), the first film of its kind in Korea. Only five socialist-type films were made throughout the Japanese colonial period, because of difficulties dealing with two archenemies—the Japanese imperial government and capitalism. Therefore, socialism was felt less in filmmaking than in reviews and critical debate.

Entering into the 1930s, the number of professionals in technical areas such as cinematography, sound recording, and film developing grew rapidly. Among them, Lee Pil-woo is one of the most noteworthy figures in Korean cinema history. He was born the son of a clock shop owner and played with a slide projector when he was little. Later he became famous as a cinematographer during the silent film era and taught many followers, including his siblings. He was also a pioneer of the Korean sound film, shooting the country's first talkie, *The Story of Chun-hyang* (Lee Myung-woo, 1935), by developing his own sound production technology in cooperation with Japanese engineers. After the release of *The Story of Chun-hyang*, silent films continued to be made, both because of technical limitations in production and screening and the lasting popularity of *byunsa* (silent film narrators). Lee Pil-woo remained as a godfather of Korean cinema technology even after liberation from Japanese colonial rule, as he took charge of constructing a government-funded studio.

The Japanese imperial government systematized its censorship of Korean cinema by passing the “Motion Picture and Film Censorship Regulation” in 1926. As Japan launched its military assault on China at the beginning of the 1930s, production activities in Korea became more limited, and censorship created a crisis atmosphere in Korean cinema.

The Expansion of National Cinema

Japanese oppression caused between twenty and thirty Korean filmmakers and actors to flee to Shanghai, then the Hollywood of the east. They were so active in the film world there that they appear in Chinese cinema history books. Among them, the actor Jin Yan (金焰) was known as the “Film Emperor of Shanghai.” He starred with Chinese actresses such as Ruan Lingyu (阮玲玉) in the city’s finest films. Lee Pil-woo wrote detailed reports about the Shanghai film studios of the 1930s (*Chosun Ilbo* newspaper, 21~24 January 1930).

The Second Pusan International Film Festival (1997) showed *Between Sky and Earth* (1951), by the unknown director, Heo Young. A film buff, Heo had decided to make films at a time when most Korean directors had given up filmmaking, even if it meant he had to follow the Japanese army and make pro-Japanese films. He remained in Indonesia after the Second World War and established a cinema-theque, a production company, and a film academy, living a second life as “Dr. Hu Yung,” father of Indonesian cinema.

These cases demonstrate a need to expand our understanding of national cinema during the silent film era. (Kim So-hee)

Motion Picture and Film Censorship Regulation

Film policies in Korea during the Japanese colonial period took an aggressive cultural approach to serving the expansion of the Japanese empire. During the earliest days of the Korean cinema from 1897 to 1923, when western films were dominant, there was no systematic framework or policy in Japan or Korea. The main thrust of film policies, if there was any, was to regulate a new entertainment place, the movie theater. Film censorship in the presence of the police was conducted on an irregular basis. Neither the Japanese imperial government nor the Japanese Government-General of Korea produced an organized system for monitoring this new medium then. Such relative non-interference began to fade as the 1920s progressed.

The Japanese Government-General of Korea created a Motion Picture Department in April 1920 to enhance its propaganda for Japanese imperialism inside and outside of Korea. This led to an increased ideological assault on Koreans through films. The department operated education programs to justify Japanese rule over Korea at hotels, schools, and town halls across the peninsula. It also unified the scattered management of show business under the authority of the Japanese Government-General of Korea by enacting the “Entertainment and Entertainment Venue Regulation” in 1922, the “Motion Picture and Film Censorship Regulation” in 1926, and the “Motion Picture and Film Control Regulation” in 1936.

Systematic control over motion pictures was established after the Gyeonggi-do Police Office announced the Entertainment and Entertainment Venue Regulation in 1922. Censorship of films seemed to be in place, but the regulation was only effective within Gyeonggi-do and designed to regulate not films but theaters. The Japanese Government-General of Korea felt a need for legislation to provide it with authority to take unified and systematic control over Korean cinema, which resulted in the enactment of the Motion Picture and Film Censorship

Regulation on 5 July 1926.

The first provision of the regulation stipulates that any film that fails to pass censorship is banned. According to the most problematic third provision, a film can only be released when the censorship bureau acknowledges that the film cannot damage public security, morals, and health. These criteria were too comprehensive and ambiguous to evaluate. Furthermore, the fifth provision specifies that even a film that has passed censorship can be limited for exhibition or banned if it is found harmful according to the criteria. Whether the film is censored or not is at the discretion of the Japanese Government-General of Korea in accordance with the eighth provision. The Motion Picture and Film Censorship Regulation was a product of the will of the Japanese imperial government to subjugate Korean thoughts and sentiments as it sensed the growing influence of film over the public.

As a result, only three out of eight reels of *Bloody Horse* (Hong Kae-myung, 1928) survived censorship and about 994 feet of *A Ferry Boat that No One Owns* (Lee Kyu-hwan, 1932) was cut. The title of Na Woon-kyu's *Going across the Dooman River* had to be changed to *Looking for Love* (1928). As a measure of the brutality of Japanese censorship, 24,982 meters of film was scissored from the total 18,949,911 meters of films censored in 1927. (Jay Kim)

Shinpa Films and Modernity

The *shinpa* or melodrama genre and style provided a practical solution to the problem of what kind of film Korea would make in the early days of its cinema. It was 1916 when the press first used the term *shinpa* to introduce the activities of Im Sung-Ku's Hyeokshin-dan troupe, after which it circulated among the public. Im introduced theatrical *shinpa* to Korea, having mastered its narratives, structures, and performance style while working for Japanese *shinpa* troupes. The Japanese

03

The Sound Film
and Militarism

1935~1945

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1, 2, *The Story of Chun-hyang* (Lee Myung-woo, 1935)

3, *Heartlessness* (Park Ki-chae, 1939)

4, *Narcissus* (Kim Yu-young, 1940)

5, *You and Me* (Heo Young, 1941)

Between 1935 and 1945—the last decade of Japanese occupation—sound films appeared and the earliest surviving feature films were also made. Eleven have been found in China, Japan, and Russia. They are: *Sweet Dream* (Yang Joo-nam, 1936), *Story of Shim-chung* (Ahn Suk-young, 1937), *Military Train* (Seo Kwang-je, 1938), *A Flower of a fishing village* (Ahn Chul-young, 1939), *Spring of the Korean Peninsula* (Lee Byung-il, 1941), *Homeless Angel* (Choi In-kyu, 1941), *Volunteer* (Ahn Suk-young, 1941), *Suicide Squad of the Watchtower* (Tadashi Imai, 1943), *Straits of Chosun* (Park Ki-chae, 1943), *Portrait of Youth* (Shiro Toyota, 1943), and *Vow of Love* (Choi In-kyu, 1945). These films were only known through historical documents and filmmaker testimony before. Now that they have finally come to light, we can have a better idea of Korean cinema during the years of Japanese colonial rule. However, many of these films propagate Japanese militarism, demonstrating that Korea's early sound films were marred by Japanese imperialism.

The First Korean Sound Film, *The Story of Chun-hyang*

When *Paramount on Parade* (1930), a western talkie using sound-on-disc recording, was shown in Korea in 1930, Korean filmmakers wanted to engage in sound film production, too. However, since they could not even afford sound film cameras, their wish was far from reality, and they had to wait until 1935.

As the first cinematographer and a pioneer in film technology, Lee Pil-woo set his heart on sound film production and visited China and Japan in 1931 to solve technical problems. At that time, Shochiku (松竹) Film Company in Japan succeeded in developing the Tsuchihashi (土橋) system, an imitation of the American RCA system, and made the first Japanese talkie, *Madame and Wife* (Heinosuke Gosho, 1931). After signing a technical cooperation contract with Tsuchi-hashii, Lee screened *M* (Fritz Lang, 1931), which he imported from Japan to raise funds, with a silent film projector. Naturally, the film failed at the box-office in Korea because of the language barrier. Nevertheless, the

sharp increase in sound film imports made the projection system for sound film more and more common.

After buying a Tsuchihashi recorder from Japan in 1934, Lee worked as cinematographer, sound recordist, and lab technician with his brother Lee Myung-woo to film *The Story of Chun-hyang* in 1935. The reviews were negative about the limited amount of dialogue and the decision to skip the sound mixing, and described the film as crude and amateurish. But the crowds flocked into the theaters to see the first Korean talkie.

The Dominance of Sound Film and Increased Co-Productions

Sound became a selling point in the film industry and almost half the films made in 1936 were talkies. The same year saw the release of the first music film, *Songs of Chosun* (Kim Sang-jin). In addition, the third film in the series inspired by *Arirang* (Na Woon-kyu, 1926), which had been a great hit during the silent film era, was made in form of a sound film. Once sound film took over completely in 1937, a whole new generation of the theater actors with good voices took over, such as Noh Jae-shin, Lee Jong-Chul, Moon Ye-bong, and Han Il-song. New directors who had studied directing in Japan and Germany also took control, including Park Ki-chae, Bang Han-joon, Shin Kyung-kyun, Ahn Chul-young, Lee Kyu-hwan, and Choi In-kyu. However, this transformation of the Korean cinema was led not by the development of Korea's own technology but mainly by co-productions. To solve technical problems in cinematography, sound recording, and film developing, Korean companies often called in Japanese engineers or contracted to share the distribution rights with their Japanese partners. This was because sound had become a key to success and a primary factor in rising production costs.

The Korean Cinema Realizes Its Identity

Although Hollywood's Josef von Sternberg saw *Story of Jang-hwa and Hong-ryeon* (Hong Kae-myung, 1936) and laughed at the techni-

cal underdevelopment of Korean cinema, Korea's early sound films suggested what post-modern and post-colonial resistance could be. Regardless of increasing collaboration with Japan and ever stricter colonial government control over Korean films during the second Sino-Japanese War, the critics came to realize Korean cinema's identity in the process of imitating and comparing themselves with Japanese and western films. Just as in the early days of the silent era, the start of the talkies sparked a series of adaptations from Korean classics, such as *The Story of Chun-hyang* (1935), *Story of Jang-hwa and Hong-ryeon* (1936), and *Story of Shim-chung* (1937). As examples of the rediscovery and subjective resurrection of tradition through negotiation with foreign culture, the film adaptations of classic stories presented "a strategy of colonial hybridity," which, as Homi K. Bhabha has pointed out, "ruins the imperial ruler's demand for the imitation of modernity" (1994, pp. 102~122). Whether a film succeeded in reproducing the beauty of Chosun became a standard that critics kept using. The best films of the kind were Na Woon-kyu's posthumous work, *Ohmongnyeo* (1937), considered as crude but appreciative of Korean folk culture, and *Wanderer* (Lee Kyu-hwan, 1937), a collaboration with the Japanese but rich in local color. The first Korean film festival was held by the *Chosun Ilbo* newspaper in 1938, and the audience voted *Arirang* as the Best Silent Film and *Story of Shim-chung* as the Best Sound Film. This can be seen as the realization of Korean cinema's identity. *Arirang* is set in a rural village, capturing Koreans' unique sentiments and lifestyles, and *Story of Shim-chung* is a film adaptation from a Korean classic with songs from its *pansori* version to bring it alive.

Imperial Japan's Film Regulations after the Chosun Film Decree

A total of twenty-six films were made between 1935 and 1939-ten in 1939, when literary adaptations were dominant. These adaptations included *Heartlessness* (Park Ki-chae) from the original, which was the

first Korean modern novel; *Altar for a Tutelary Deity* (Bang Han-joon) from the popular fiction; *Being Lucky neither at Cards nor at Love* (Lee Myung-woo) from a story adapted from a Japanese novel; and *Song of Compassion* (Kim Yu-young) from its film novel (the contemporary literary genre that attempted to produce literary works resembling films). Because Japan kept a strong leash on Korean cinema during its all-out war, Korean film production plunged after 1940. Forcing all the theaters in Korea to show the Pledge of Allegiance to the Japanese Empire (皇國臣民誓詞), the Flag of the Rising Sun, pro-war slogans before screenings, and propaganda films like *Military Train*, the Japanese Government-General of Korea enforced the Chosun Film Decree in January 1940.

The decree crucially arrested the development of the Korean cinema. Those who refused to cooperate with Imperial Japan left the cinema, but those who remained helped producing Japanese propaganda films to mobilize Koreans for the war Japan was engaged in. Six films in total were made in 1940. Three were cultural films (a general term for educational films, scientific films and documentaries). These were made by The Chosun Cultural Film Association, an organization the Japanese Government-General of Korea sponsored. Their titles were *Dawn of the Mountain Village*, *Light of the Sea*, and *Pure Heart*. Two others were by the pro-Japanese Koryeo Film Association. *Tuition* (Choi In-kyu) and *Garden of Victory* (Bang Han-joon) encouraged integration with Japan and collaboration in the war. The last one, *Narcissus* (Kim Yu-young), was in line with the colonial period's melodramas that compared Korea's fate to the rape of a virgin.

Co-produced Propaganda Films in the Last Years of Japanese Imperialism

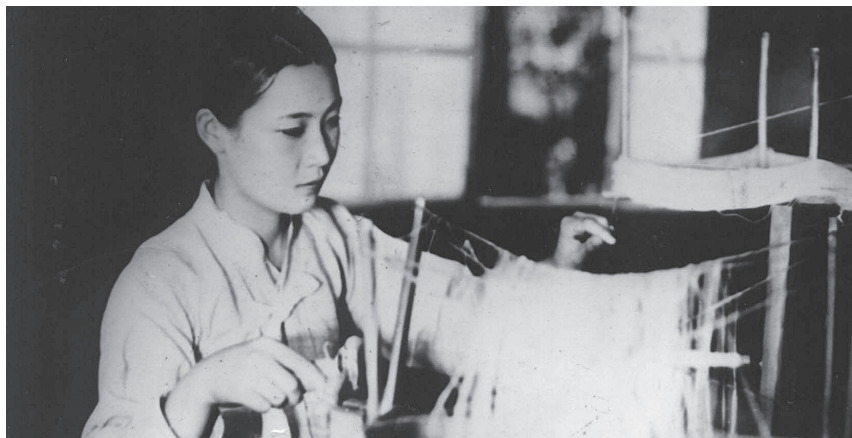
In 1941, all distribution companies were forcibly closed and merged into the government-controlled Chosun Film Distribution Corporation. In the following year, film companies followed suit and went under the control of the Chosun Film Production Corporation. Keep-

ing a tight grip on Korean cinema by centralizing production and distribution, the Japanese Government-General of Korea produced only films propagandizing militarism until Japan was defeated in the war. To promote voluntary enlistment, *Volunteer* and *You and Me* (Heo Young, 1941) were made with the full support of the Chosun Military News Department. To encourage the people of Chosun to migrate to Manchuria, *Long Distance to Happiness* (Jeon Chang-geun, 1941) was co-produced with the Manchurian Motion Picture Association. Choi In-kyu, who had demonstrated his abilities with *Tuition*, the first synchronous sound film, directed the pro-Japanese film *Homeless Angel*, which was also released in Japan as the first Korean film recommended by the Japanese Ministry of Education. After the production of the last privately made film, *Singaeji* (Yoon Bong-choon, 1942), all films dubbed into Korean were banned and only films in Japanese (the official national language) were released.

Japanese sympathizers in the Chosun Film Production Corporation such as Park Ki-chae, Bang Han-joon, Shin Kyung-kyun, Ahn Suk-young, and Choi In-kyu worked as directors according to the plans of the Japanese Government-General of Korea right up to the collapse of Imperial Japan. During this period, the Chosun Film Production Corporation produced propaganda films using Korean actors and staff in cooperation with directors and technical experts of Japanese film companies such as Shochiku, Toho (東寶) and Daiei (大映). Examples included *Suicide Squad of the Watchtower* and *Vow of Love*, directed by Tadashi Imai (今井正) and assisted by Choi In-kyu, and *Portrait of Youth*, directed by Shiro Toyota (豊田四郎). Although Korea's long-awaited independence from Japan finally arrived on 15 August 1945, the activities of pro-Japanese filmmakers against the Korean people have never been punished. According to the film policy of the US military administration, now they began to make films about independence. (Kim Ryeo-sil)



1



2



3

1, *Story of Jang-hwa and Hong-ryeon* (Hong Kae-myung, 1936)

2, *Story of Shim-chung* (Ahn Suk-young, 1937)

3, Uijeongbu Studio

04

Liberation and
the Korean War

1945~1953



1



2



3



4

1. Yun Bong-gil the Martyr (Yoon Bong-choon, 1947)
2. Breaking the Wall (Han Hyung-mo, 1949) Poster
3. Viva Freedom! (Choi In-kyu, 1946)
4. The Adventure of Ttolttori (Lee Kyu-hwan, 1946)

The liberation arrived suddenly when the atomic bomb devastated Japan, whose motto was “death and no surrender (本土玉碎)”. Following Emperor Hirohito (迪官裕仁)’s unconditional surrender, Japan’s rule of Korea finally ended. On 15 August 1945, Koreans shouted with joy and excitement over the liberation.

Hope was everywhere, because they could rebuild the country. However, with the Korean peninsula coming under foreign control again, their joy did not last long. In accordance with the Yalta Pact, the 38th parallel was established as the boundary between the Soviet (northern) and American (southern) Korean zones of occupation, which came as a great shock to Koreans. The Cold War was over, but the political conflicts between the US and the USSR, the world’s two superpowers, intensified around the Korean peninsula.

Korean Films During the Liberation Era

Some argue the post-liberation era corresponds to the three-year period from the liberation (1945) to the establishment of the South Korean government (1948). Others insist that the liberation era should be the five-year-period from the liberation to the outbreak of the Korean War (1950). We accept the latter view, because both the liberation and reconstruction of Korea need to be taken into consideration when we talk about the Korean film industry during the post-liberation era. However, the post-liberation period will be further divided, with the establishment of the South Korean government as the watershed.

The first part of the post-liberation era witnessed a big rise in so-called “liberation films.” With cameras, sound recording and developing equipment in ruins, the cinema was in bad shape. However, that did not stop Korean filmmakers from throwing themselves into film production, expressing the joy of the liberation as well as their national pride. This naturally led to films dealing with independence movement leaders such as *The Chronicle of An Jung-geun* (Lee Ku-young, 1946) or *Yun Bong-gil, the Martyr* (Yoon Bong-choon, 1947). A series

of feature films portraying the joy of the liberation or the excitement of rebuilding the country was also produced. *Viva Freedom!* (Choi In-kyu, 1946) was one of the most representative feature films of the era.

The second part of the post-liberation era saw aggravated ideological conflicts between leftists and rightists. Unfortunately, the Korean peninsula was divided, with the Republic of Korea in the South and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the North. Films made during this period reflected the atmosphere of the time, dealing with anti-communism or portraying the tragedy of national division symbolized by the 38th parallel. The year 1949 alone saw films such as *The Reality of the North Korea* (Lee Chang-geun), *The Collapsed 38th Parallel* (Yoon Bong-choon), *Breaking the Wall* (Han Hyung-mo), *A Fellow Soldier* (Hong Kae-myung), and *For the Country* (Ahn Jong-hwa).

In the second part of the post-liberation era filmmakers also pushed the envelope despite poor production conditions. *A Diary of Woman* (Hong Seong-ki, 1949) was the first 16mm color film in Korea. Choi In-kyu's *Pasi* (1949) was all shot on location on the island of Heuksan. Noh Pil's *Pilot An Chang-nam* (1949) was an aerial film. Yu Dong-il made the musical film *The Blue Hill* (1948). Yoon Dae-ryong's *A Public Prosecutor and a Teacher* (1948) is well known for its *shinpa*-style narrative, with a *byunsa* using a microphone to provide voices for the characters in the film. The melodrama *A Hometown in the Heart* (Yoon Yong-kyu, 1949) received fulsome praise from film critics.

All these films used technical changes to pioneer new directions, which resulted in various new genres. This suggested that filmmaking was recovering from the technical setbacks that had made kino-dramas and 16mm silent films reappear in the early post-liberation era. Overcoming such difficulties, the Korean film industry found itself reinvigorated.

Korean Movie Theaters Dominated by American Films

After the liberation, American films, distributed by the Central Motion Picture Exchange (CMPE), dominated Korean screens. The CMPE had a monopoly on exporting and distributing American films from the eight major US film companies. With more than a hundred American films being screened annually in Korean movie theaters, American films had more than fifty per cent of the local film market. They included *In Old Chicago* (Henry King, 1938), *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942), and *Random Harvest* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1942). This represented a huge success, given that there were only sixty-one Korean films made over the five years after the liberation—four in 1946, thirteen in 1947, twenty-two in 1948, twenty in 1949, and two in the first half of 1950. Another noteworthy point is that there was a remarkable increase in the number of documentaries and cultural films as well as newsreels.

With the liberation ushering in the era of US Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK), newsreels were sponsored by the USAMGIK as part of an effort to publicize US global policies as well as the policies of the USAMGIK. They included films introducing the United States, materials on the horrors of war and its legacy, and others about democratic activities in South Korea, which were intended to support the South Korean government.

Meanwhile, Korean directors busied themselves producing cultural films, such as *The Topography of Jeju Island* (Lee Yong-min, 1946), *The Rose of Sharon* (Ahn Chul-young, 1948), and *The Town of Hope* (Choi In-kyu, 1948). Among Korean documentaries of this period, *Liberation News* (1946), *Chosun Olympic* (1947), and *The Korean Textile Co.* (1949) are noteworthy.

The Chosun Film Union

The Chosun Film Union (CFU) played a dominant role in the Korean film community during the post-liberation era. The organization was established on 16 December 1945 and worked actively to improve

Korean cinema. When the South Korean government was established in 1948, the CFU ceased its activities and was then forgotten. Given that leaders of the group such as Choo Min, Seo Kwang-je, Kim Han, and Kang Ho were all former members of the KAPF movement under Japanese rule, it is fair to say the CFU was left-wing. The KAPF was a famous left-wing group under Japanese rule. However, the fact that the CFU also had pro-Japanese filmmakers as its members (in particular Seo Kwang-je) indicates that the organization was not a radical group. While the CFU was led by left-wingers, its members were primarily film professionals.

The CFU was in conflict with the USAMGIK. It was because the group followed the official guidelines and direction of its left-wing superiors or authorities—the Democratic National Front (DNF) and the Chosun Cultural Federation (CCF)—while the USAMGIK banned the activities of left-wing groups. If there had been nothing more to the CFU than its ideology and cause, its status would have been significantly weakened. However, the organization actively participated in raising concerns about and providing solutions to controversial issues facing the Korean film industry. For example, the CFU insisted that the government should take a leading role in developing the domestic film industry, accused the Central Motion Picture Exchange (CMPE) of monopolizing film distribution, asked for the abolition of regulations hobbling the film industry, and also requested the cancellation of heavy taxes on artistic events. This enabled the CFU to take a central role in the Korean film world.

Korean Filmmakers and the Korean War

The Korean War brought severe hardship. With their lives in ruins and their families scattered, Koreans were devastated. Amid such overwhelming tragedy caused by the fratricidal war, filmmakers went to the front and shot historic war footage. They also made films while staying in the refugee cities where people sheltered from the war. During the war, the army sponsored combat documentaries and

newsreels. The biggest achievement of the army film crew was *An Assault of Justice* volumes 1 (1951) and 2 (1952). Feature film production continued despite the difficult conditions. They included *A Bouquet of Three Thousand People* (Shin Kyung-kyun, 1951), *The Evil Night* (Shin Sang-ok, 1952), and *The Street of Sun* (Min kyung-sik, 1952). The rapid development of the film industry when it moved down to refugee cities like Busan or Daegu and the technical advances used to overcome harsh conditions constitute the “legacy” of the Korean War in the cinema. (Cho Hye-jung)

05

The Revival of
the Film Industry

1954~1962



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2



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4



5

1. *Chun-hyang Story* (Lee Kyu-hwan, 1955)
2. *Madame Freedom* (Han Hyung-mo, 1956)
3. *Life* (Lee Kang-chun, 1958)
4. *Chun-hyang Story* (Lee Kyu-hwan, 1955) publicity still
5. *Chun-hyang Story* (Lee Kyu-hwan, 1955)

Films In the Age Of Popular Culture

Following the armistice agreement on 27 July 1953, the South Korean government returned to Seoul from the refugee city of Busan on 15 August 1953, and reestablished itself. During the 1950s, South Koreans were dismally poor because of the war, and the tension between South and North was not mitigated. However, this could be called the “age of explosive energy,” because the country was gearing up for a new start. Korean society found itself following a general trend of Americanization and modernization. Western-style democracy affected every aspect of policy. Capitalism also spread, changing the way people thought and acted in their daily lives. In the 1950s, modernization led Korean society to undergo fundamental changes in its structure and customs, heralding an era of great upheaval.

Noteworthy social phenomena in the 1950s included rapid urbanization, booming popular culture, and mass media. This suggests that such trends were increasingly viewed from an industrial perspective. Some people had regarded filmmaking as a profit-driven enterprise in the past, but in the 1950s people did not feel guilty when they bluntly insisted that filmmaking was a capitalist industry. Today, this is taken for granted. While the importance of the cultural aspect of cinema was still emphasized to promote social enlightenment or conduct political campaigns, most 1950s films were made for mass amusement. Of course, there were also anti-communist propaganda films. But these were not as influential as previously. After the war, filmmakers became relatively free from the burden of dealing with ideologies, and there was intense debate over whether commercial aspects and artistic values could be integrated in the cinema.

The Film Industry and Film Policy

Following the armistice agreement in 1953, the Korean film industry gradually recovered. Thanks to the great success of *Chun-hyang Story* (Lee Kyu-hwan, 1955) and *Madame Freedom* (Han Hyung-mo, 1956), there was a boom, heralding the “Chungmuro era.” During the gold-

en age of the Korean film industry, from the 1950s to the 1980s, Chungmuro was home to filmmakers. The number of film production companies increased so rapidly that over seventy film companies were located in the Chungmuro area of Seoul. Before 1956, the number of films produced annually was no more than twenty. After 1956, the rate of film production soared, until one hundred and eight films were made in 1959. Government policies that helped promote the film industry underlay this growth. Government laws aimed at promoting the film industry included: “The Exemption of Admission Taxes on Domestic Films” (1954) and “The Preferential Treatment of Korean Films and Awards for Producing Quality Films” (1958).

Various strategies were also developed to boost the film industry. 35mm films replaced 16mm black-and-white ones as standard. In 1958, Korea’s first Cinemascope film, *Life*, was directed by Lee Kang-chun. Jeon Chang-geun’s *King Gojong and the Martyr An Jung-geun* (1959), a box-office hit, triggered a boom in epic films with lots of spectacle. In 1961, Korea’s first color Cinemascope film was made. Other achievements during this period included co-productions with foreign countries, which allowed many foreign filmmakers to visit the country, and various awards at international film festivals.

Despite controversies over the censorship of the anti-communist film *Piagol* (Lee Kang-chun, 1955) and the gangster Im Hwa-soo and the Freedom Party’s abuse of power in its dealings with the film industry, the overall atmosphere surrounding the industry was not oppressive. Furthermore, thanks to the April Revolution of 1960, Korea’s first civilian film organization, the Film Ethics Committee, was launched, which helped to ease rigid government censorship. Before the Park Cheong-hee (a.k.a. Park Chung-hee) military regime, formed after the military coup on 16 May 1961, established the Motion Picture Law on 1962, the film industry continued to grow, enjoying an atmosphere of relative freedom. However, the regulations imposed by the military regime were as strict as those imposed by the Japanese Government-General of Korea under Japanese rule.

Various Genres, Directors and Stars

The revival of the film industry witnessed not just quantitative growth, but also qualitative growth. Modernity diversified genres. While conventional *shinpa*-style melodramas and anti-communist propaganda films were still produced, modern films portraying social reality with a critical view kept filmmakers busy. To produce these films, filmmakers experimented with various genres such as melodramas, comedies, thrillers, gangster films, and horror films. It is true that they were much influenced by Hollywood films, as well as post-war Italian and French films. However, Korean cinema mixed genres to produce new genres and achieved its own identity. These various genres reflected the spirit of the age in various ways, stirring fierce debates about conflicting values circulating in that period.

A factor behind the boom was the abundant supply of manpower. The film industry had not only veteran directors, who had made films since the colonial period, but also talented rookies, many of whom debuted in the 1950s. These younger directors contributed significantly to the growth of the industry by producing many quality films in both the 1950s and 1960s. This was also the time when Korea's first female director appeared. Meanwhile, the appearance of galaxies of film stars had more significant implications. The 1950s was the age of the film star. Actors became so popular that they were objects of public fascination and debate in film culture, which focused on their private lives as well as their acting. Furthermore, magazines often focused on actresses' sensuous bodies. Stars not only tried to look sexy, but also demonstrated an ability to use their attractive bodies to achieve their aims. As popular interest in the flesh was growing, views on love and sex were changing, and so was the socio-cultural meaning of the body. This led to active debates about sex in the 1950s, driven by the deep impact of film stars on the general public.

The Vitality and Open-Mindedness of Korean Cinema

With South Korea transitioning from authoritarianism to democracy, the solemn social atmosphere that had prevailed gave way to liveliness. Freedom began to spread, allowing individuals to voice their opinions for the first time ever. The cinema responded to these changes in a most sensitive and proactive way. Subjects ignored in the past, such as love, sex, and the lives of ordinary people, became main themes. Moral values were reflected not by portraying collective views, but by describing individual lives. The growing focus on daily lives of individuals stood in clear contrast to wartime, when conflicting ideologies prevailed. In other words, freed of the old burden of ideologies, Korean cinema in the 1950s was full of vitality resulting from a combination of hope for a new era and enlightened awareness of individuals and their ordinary lives. More fundamentally, it was the film community's open-minded attitude that allowed the Korean film industry to accept and adapt proactively to social changes. (Oh Young-sook)

06

The Korean Cinema Renaissance
and Genre Films

1963~1971



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6

- 1, *Eunuch* (Shin Sang-ok, 1968)
- 2, *Women of Yi-Dynasty* (Shin Sang-ok, 1969)
- 3, *The Story of Chun-hyang* (Lee Sung-ku, 1971)
- 4, *Early Rain* (Jung Jin-woo, 1966)
- 5, *The Barefooted Young* (Kim Kee-duk, 1964)
- 6, *The Seashore Village* (Kim Soo-yong, 1965)

The Film Industry and Genre Films

The first Motion Picture Law, enacted in 1962, shaped the film industry during the 1963 to 1972 period. Furthermore, it was a period in which both quality and quantity flourished, and a diverse range of between one and two hundred films were produced every year. It was truly the renaissance of the Korean cinema. In 1969, 233 films were produced and 178 million tickets were sold, a record not surpassed until 2005.

During the 1950s, the technical problems and inconsistencies that had followed the 1945 liberation of Korea from Japanese rule were resolved. The 1960s was a time of industrial revival that saw the diffusion of new technologies, including color and wide screen. During this period, cinema became the main public entertainment form, and there were five to six admissions per head of population annually. Auteur directors including Kim Ki-young, Lee Man-hee, Shin Sang-ok, and Kim Soo-yong produced one masterwork after another.

Although this flourishing scene marks the 1960s as a kind of renaissance, it was a complex phenomenon. To some extent, output was driven by government policies and laws, and the films produced were colored by the anxieties of modernization. Between the end of the Korean War and 1962, Korean films were produced in conditions of social and political instability. Then, after 1963, there was a diversification of genre films that coincided with both social and film industrial transformation.

The 1960s can be characterized as the era of the genre film. This was because the increase in output created a critical mass enabling the discernment of generic patterns and an accompanying critical discourse. During rapid modernization and industrialization after 1963, Korean cinema prospered in a dynamic relationship with an engaged audience. On the other hand, the films were also the products of government support, which included the system of awards for producing quality films, the centralization of production, and the foreign film import business. Almost all directors of the 1960s made films

within the framework of genres, including the auteur directors active in the 1960s, such as Shin Sang-ok, Lee Man-hee, and Kim Soo-yong. Examining the invention, evolution and disappearance of genres during this period gives an insight into the shifting flows of modernity.

Two Types of Genre, One Social Outlook

Korean genre films after 1963 can be divided into two types. One type evolved out of the old melodrama, period films, and comedy genres. The second consists of new genres, including action thrillers, youth films and literary films. Earlier period films appealed by offering emotional comfort in the midst of rapid modernization. However, in the late 1960s, there were films that were either decadent or in search of new stories like *Eunuch* (Shin Sang-ok, 1968) or *Women of Yi-Dynasty* (Shin Sang-ok, 1969). As modern life became ordinary rather than exotic, the familiarity of traditional period films represented by films such as *The Story of Chun-hyang* lost its comforting function. Instead, the tears of *shinpa* melodramas flooded the scene.

From the mid to late 1960s, the government suppressed popular opposition to the Korea-Japan agreement and the sending of troops to Vietnam. It also expanded its authority through modernization and economic development, entrenching the regime. In 1966, television broadcasting went nationwide (except for a few areas) and urban life began to change with the introduction of leisure culture. The modernization process mixed relief at the end of absolute poverty and the sense of helplessness in the face of contemporary politics. The Korean cinema boomed to an annual output that exceeded two hundred films in the late 1960s. Awareness of urban life energized new films with a modern sensibility, including *Homebound* (Lee Man-hee, 1967), *Mist* (Kim Soo-yong, 1967), and *The General's Mustache* (Lee Sung-ku, 1968). These films expressed doubts and frustrations about modernization in their narrative use of wide screen.

On the other hand, the movie screens were taken over by love triangle tragedies and the self-tormented love of women in pain. The suc-

cess of *Love Me Once Again* (Jung So-young, 1968) revived the *shin-pa* melodrama as an expression of the public's despair. In 1969, more than 96 per cent of films were made in color to compete with television, stepping up commercialism with the visualization of colorful *mise-en-scène* consisting of bright and vivid screens filled with multi-colored props and women's clothing.

This trend to commercialism can also be seen in the way genre films copied hits and the tendency to entice audiences into theaters with lurid and sensational themes. The genre films of the mid to late 1960s—whether melodramas, comedies or modernist films—all expressed the same social outlook. For example, the laughter at gender reversals in transvestite comedies and the gender role changes in other comedies were both preludes to a conservative restoration of traditional gender relationships.

This perspective also applies to youth films and action thrillers, which were introduced from the early to mid 1960s. Youth films became popular when the young people who consumed and longed for Western culture took over the urban space surrounding the Academy Theater in Seoul, where many youth films were screened. Although they raved about the stars and showed youthful passion about tragic love and social aspirations in films like *The Barefooted Young* (Kim Kee-duk, 1964) or *Early Rain* (Jung Jin-woo, 1966), they could not find a position in real life to realize their own "youth." The fact that most of these films were adaptations of Japanese screenplays indicates that the youth of the 1960s substituted their thirst for something new with proxy satisfaction and consumption.

A new generation of directors gave the 1960s action thriller a commercial boost with heroic action scenes of men flying across Manchuria, to Japan and Hong Kong. Despite stylistic innovation and new narrative elements, these films were criticized for their poor plots. The cinematic techniques that produced thrills come out of an extremely modern system requiring control and structure, but the Korean action thrillers were "all action but no thrills." Although they had

men showing their mettle around the globe, poor plotting undercut the heroism of their protagonists, and they did not last long. In contrast to melodramas, the main audience for the action thriller film was male. This is also true of the swordsman film. Swordsman films drew on the legacy of the Hong Kong swordsman films, the James Bond series, and spaghetti westerns, all of which did remarkably well at the box-office in Korea during the 1960s. This trend was followed by Korean-Hong Kong co-productions that lasted until the 1980s, forming regional links. As more and more films were released, swordsman and action films were also shown along with the horror films in second-run theaters on the margins of the cultural scene. The genre films boom of the 1960s resulted from industrial demand, its expression of the social mood, as well as the Motion Picture Law and policies.

The Motion Picture Law and the Industrial Structure

The Motion Picture Law was enacted in 1962, and revised three times in this period—in 1963, 1966, and 1970. Despite these many revisions, it retained its basic principle of trying to harness films to nationalist development. The contradiction between protecting and fostering film production companies while controlling the films themselves can be seen in the combination of the double censorship of both screenplays and completed films with the policy of central control over import and production, which was maintained into the mid 1980s. The primary elements of the central control policy were the industrialization of film production companies according to the level of their facilities and the linking of film production and import through central control mechanisms. Furthermore, it included the adjustment of the number of films released according to the production and import quota system. Until it was abolished with the fifth revision of the Motion Picture Law in 1984, the double censorship system led to the cutting of many scenes in Korean films and kept them under the microscope for either public indecency or violating

the anti-communist law. As the right to import foreign films became difficult to obtain, some people borrowed other registered people's names to get the right to import films and others made literary, enlightenment, or anti-communist films, for which they were supported by policy.

The literary films boom that started in 1965 with *The Seashore Village* (Kim Soo-yong) was driven by a desire for recognition of "excellence" relying on the power of the literature. Despite the notable achievements of these literary films, one cannot forget that selection as quality films was the primary motivation behind their production. Another kind of quality film during this time was the anti-communist film, which depicted the Korean War as a plot to invade South Korea by the North Korean puppet regime, and the espionage agents sent to the south as immoral people who aimed their guns even at their own parents for the sake of their ideology. "Enlightenment" films were designed to publicize aspects of government policy. Both anti-communist and enlightenment films were made in great numbers even after the Yushin ("revitalizing reform") regime of 1972 that further strengthened authoritarian government. They were used to secure foreign film import quotas and sometimes not even released in theaters. Consequently, the policies that began in the 1960s constrained the natural evolution of Korean cinema genres and distorted the industry's structure.

The industrial structure of the Korean cinema from the late 1950s to the mid 1990s was based on the interrelationships between local distributors in the six regional markets across the nation and around twenty licensed film production companies. Korean film production was financed by pre-sales to local distributors who profited from local earnings later. Despite criticisms that this structure prevented the recirculation of box-office income into future productions, it played an important role in the structure of investment in and production and exhibition of Korean films. However, its function weakened in the 1970s when the film industry became stagnant.

In the 1960s, the genre system was intertwined with the oppressive

mood that accompanied modernization and the policies of the time. Nevertheless, many films were made, movies were popular, and they represented magnificent artistic and directorial achievements. Therefore, the films in this period are particularly worthy of further analysis.
(Kim Mee hyun)

07

The Authoritarian Period
and a Depression in
the Film Industry

1972~1979



1. KBS-TV advertisement
2. *Rainy Days* (Yu Hyun-mok, 1979)
3. *Heavenly Homecoming to Stars* (Lee Jang-ho, 1974)
4. *A Road to Sampo* (Lee Man-hee, 1975)

The Watershed of the 1970s

In the 1970s, the world was gasping for air with the Vietnam War, Middle East conflicts, the Watergate scandal, the Sino-American Honeymoon, and the anti-US demonstrations in Iran. Korea also went through rapid changes with the beginning of the Yushin (“revitalizing reform”) period in 1972, which instituted an even more authoritarian government. (In October 1972, Park Cheong-hee [a.k.a. Park Chung-hee] proclaimed martial law and the Yushin regime began with the declaration of a state of emergency. The National Assembly was dissolved, political party activities were stopped, and part of the constitution was suspended. Democratic forces in society fought against this regime, but the Yushin regime finally ended when Park Cheong-hee was assassinated on October 26, 1979.) These changes included rapid industrialization accompanying high-speed growth, and the development of the leisure industry, including television. Under such circumstances, Korean cinema slipped out of its 1960s golden age and found itself stuck in a slump as it entered the 1970s. Ironically, the film industry’s slide into bankruptcy was the inverse of the general Korean growth curve.

Audiences dropped from their 1960s highs of 178 million to about 70 million or a third of that figure in 1976. Annual admissions dropped from 5 to 6 per capita to 1.8. This rapid drop in audiences was matched by a drop in theaters from 659 in 1969 to 541 in 1976. Underlying this were inherent problems in the revival period that had begun in the late 1950s, betraying the apparent prosperity of the times. Korean cinema only enjoyed a golden age when there was no other source of entertainment. It was not prepared to cope with rapid changes in Korean society, when television and other forms of entertainment spread widely. This made it harder for ordinary films to attract audiences. Some contemporary journalists reflected the prevailing gloom by even speaking of the “dark ages of cinema.”

The government only responded to the downturn in the film industry with a few revisions of the Motion Picture Law, in an effort to correct

the “loss of public trust due to the excess of disorganized film companies and lack of investment.” The Korean Motion Picture Promotion Corporation (KMPPC) was established to promote Korean-made films according to the 1973 revision. However, this revision also fueled the over-concentration of film capital by changing the registration system into a license system with the avowed aim of strengthening control over film companies. Most of the film producers who benefited from this thought of Korean film production as a cursory act for obtaining a foreign film import quota and had no sense of responsibility for taking part in cultural development. This made a bad situation in regard to quality worse. Therefore, the government changed the enforcement ordinance of the Motion Picture Law again and announced new film policies every year. However, they did not have any practical effect, because they patched over the problem rather than treating its underlying causes.

The 1970s: Master Filmmakers and New Talents

In spite of the slump and the control exerted by the Yushin regime, during the 1970s the so-called master filmmakers and new directors looked for a way to co-exist and just get on with making films.

Kim Ki-young made *The Woman of Fire* (1971) and *The Insect Woman* (1972); Yu Hyun-mok made *Flame* (1975) and *Rainy Days* (1979); Shin Sang-ok made *Three Days of Their Reign* (1973) and *A Boy at His Age of 13* (1974); Kim Soo-yong made *The Earth* (1974); and Lee Man-hee made *A Road to Sampo* (1975). Another film from this period that cannot be left out is Im Kwon-taek’s *Weeds* (1973), which was a turning point in his style.

Kim Ki-young’s *The Woman of Fire* and *The Insect Woman* were remakes of his earlier *The Housemaid* (1960), and he remade it again as *Carnivore* in 1984. They were unique and mysterious films in Kim’s auteur style. Director Yu Hyun-mok based his *Rainy Days* on an original novel by Yoon Heung-kil, sublimating ideological conflict and the tragedy of national division into an accomplished art film. Shin Sang-

ok's *A Boy at His Age of 13* was also an impressive film that told the tragedies of war from the boy's point of view. However, except for the hugely successful *The Woman of Fire*, none of these films was a commercial hit, even though they were adaptations of literary works. Instead, new directors gained attention with their new and fresh visual language and sensibility. Lee Doo-yong debuted in 1970 with *The Lost Wedding Veil*; Lee Won-se and Lee Kyung-tae in 1971 with *The Lost Season* and *Bounty* respectively; Ha Kilchong in 1972 with *The Pollen of Flowers*; Hong Pa, Park Nam-soo, and Kim Su-hyeong in 1973 with *Love with My Whole Body*, *My Sweet Home* and *Young Ones* respectively; and Lee Jang-ho and Kim Ho-sun in 1974 with *Heavenly Homecoming to Stars* and *Hwannyeo* respectively.

Among these films, young audiences loved Lee Jang-ho's *Heavenly Homecoming to Stars* because it was a tasteful and cheerful adaptation of Choi In-ho's tremendously popular newspaper serial novel. After that, Kim Ho-sun's *Yeong-ja's Heydays* (1975) and Ha Kilchong's *The March of Fools* (1975) were also successful and the "new wave" was born. Inspired by this, these three directors combined with two other directors (Lee Won-se and Hong Pa) and one critic (myself) to form the group called Young Sang Shi Dae (The Era of the Image). Under the flag of the "Art Movement of the Korean Cinema," new actors were recruited, prospective directors were trained, and the film magazine called *Young Sang Shi Dae* was founded. Made when the Young Sang Shi Dae movement was most active, director Kim Ho-sun's *Winter Woman* (1977) set a record for the decade among Korean films when it attracted more than 580,000 people.

Korean Cinema Genres in the 1970s

The most prominent 1970s genre was the melodrama. The *Love Me Once Again* series was launched in 1968 by director Jung So-young and was the most successful set of films in the 1960s. The third episode in the series was released in 1970 and had the best box-office results that year. On that momentum, *Love Me Once Again (Final Epi-*

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1. *Winter Woman* (Kim Ho-sun, 1977)

2. *The Woman of Fire* (Kim Ki-young, 1971)

3. *Testimony* (Im Kwon-taek, 1973)

4. *The Wild Flowers in the Battle Field* (Lee Man-hee, 1974)

5. *Never Never Forget Me* (Moon Yeosong, 1976)

sode) was made the next year. As the absence of political life made the social situation in the late 1960s become blocked, it can be assumed that the audience chose these *shinpa*-style melodramas in search of psychological escape.

This enabled a change of generations with the unprecedented success of Lee Jang-ho's *Heavenly Homecoming to Stars* in 1974. In 1975, he followed up with *It Rained Yesterday*, breathing new life into the melodrama. However, in an effort to overcome the economic slump, a huge number of "hostess films" were made in the late 1970s. These were melodramas featuring hostesses or prostitutes as main characters. They included Byun Jang-ho's *Miss O's Apartment* series (1978, 79); Jung So-young's *The Woman I Betrayed* (1978) and *The Man I Left* (1979) series; and Noh Se-han's *26×365=0* series (1979, 82).

Also in the 1970s, there were period films, horror films, action films, and even disguised co-production films, all struggling to overcome the depression. Among the period films, *Gate of Woman* (Byun Jang-ho, 1972), *An Executioner* (Byun Jang-ho, 1974), *Concentration of Attention* (Choi In-hyun, 1976), and *A War Diary* (Jang Il-ho, 1977) were well received critically. Notable among the horror films were *You Become a Star, too* (Lee Jang-ho, 1975) and *A Remodeled Beauty* (Jang Il-ho, 1975). Among the action films, there was *Manchurian Tiger* (Lee Doo-yong, 1974). Furthermore, the KMPPC directly produced national policy films. These included *Testimony* (Im Kwon-taek, 1973), which portrayed the war seen from the point of view of a female college student, and *Wild Flowers on the Battlefield* (Lee Man-hee, 1974), which portrayed the tragedy of fratricidal war with lyrical realism. Other national policy films included anti-communist films like *Wonsan Secret Operation* (Sul Tae-ho, 1976) and *The Last Words from a Comrade in Arms* (Lee Won-se, 1979). Included in the enlightenment films were *Parade of Wives* (Im Kwon-taek, 1974) and *Mother* (Im Won-shik, 1976).

In the late 1970s, as period films, horror films, and action films went into decline, high-teen and hostess films boomed. The high-teen films

were triggered by director Moon Yeo-song's hit film, *Never Never Forget Me* (1976), and the cycle overwhelmed other film genres. Similar films included *Blue Classroom* (Kim Eung-chun, 1976), *I am Really Sorry* (Moon Yeo-song, 1976), *Ever So Much Good!* (Lee Hyung-pyo, 1976), and *Yalkae, A Joker in High School* (Suk Rae-myung, 1977). The cycle ended in 1978 with the omnibus film *Our High School Days*, co-planned, produced, and directed by a trio of high-teen film directors; Kim Eung-chun, Moon Yeo-song, and Suk Rae-myung.

The Remnants of the 1970s

However, the 1970s was not all gloom and pessimism. It was definitely a time of economic depression in the film industry, but urban development and the growth of the youth culture cried out for freedom from the authoritarian Yushin regime. Director Ha Kilchong tried political allegory with the "Blue House" in *The Pollen of Flowers* (1972) and the dreams of defeated idealism in *The March of Fools* (1975). The character of Yeong-ja in *Yeong-ja's Heyday* goes from being a maid and bus conductor to becoming a one-armed prostitute. She shows the despair and "miracle" typical of a country girl who comes to the city as part of the huge wave of rural to urban migration. Even though the film was within the censorship standards and the enforced ideology, it showed hope in the midst of the social violence imposed on women.

Furthermore, the second-run theaters in the city that appeared in the aftermath of industrialization added to suburban culture from the 1980s on and attracted audience members with *shinpa* melodrama, horror, and action films. The young people of this period were the so-called "cultural center generation." They formed small cinema groups such as the Korean Short Film Association, Society for Image Research, and Khaidu Club. They also developed a deeper film culture and more professional knowledge than the previous generation by participating in cinema groups at European cultural centers such as the Cine-Club and the East-West Film Association. Later on, they

became the mainstays of Korean cinema. Such dynamism shows new energies and new consumers of popular culture that defy the idea of cinematic dark ages. Indeed, it indicates a spark even in the midst of industrial stagnation and harsh censorship. (Byun In-shik)

08

The New Military Regime's
Rule over Culture and the Ad-
vent of the New Film Culture

1980~1987



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1. *Good Windy Day* (Lee Jang-ho, 1980)
2. *The Aema Woman* (Jeong In-yeob, 1982)
3. *Eoh Wu-dong* (Lee Jang-ho, 1985)
4. *X* (Hah Myung-joong, 1983)
5. *Our Joyful Young Days* (Bae Chang-ho, 1987)

Korean cinema was never free from political and social constraints, which impacted heavily upon the films themselves. Although the resulting tension limited the Korean cinema, it also inspired a strange dynamic force. During this time, outside forces stimulated rigorous self-reflection in the Korean cinema. First, there was the people's art movement, which absorbed the passion for social reform and the politics for moving from dictatorship to democratization. Second was the appearance of a new young generation of filmmakers who started out in super-8 mm cinematography and took their intellectual adventure into new films. Such popular forces gradually penetrated the official policies of the new military regime and the resistance of the established film industry.

A Period of Stimulation and Distraction

The new military regime enforced nationwide martial law on 17 May 1980 and started to arrest and imprison democratic figures. Soon after, in Gwangju, there was excessive suppression by an airborne unit. Students and citizens came together spontaneously to protest against it, and this was the beginning of the Gwangju democratization movement. It ended after thousands of people were killed by military suppression. The Gwangju Democratic Uprising transformed the Korean social movement from an intellectual one into a people's movement. It also changed attitudes to the United States and created a strong sense that national liberation and social democratization were the goals of the movement.

In the historical context, the early film policies of the new regime military that appeared after the suppression of the Gwangju Democratic Uprising were an extension of the policies of the 1970s. Because concentration of ownership in the film industry and the foreign film compensation policy were continued until the mid-1980s, Korean film production remained merely a means of acquiring foreign film import quotas. Add to this strengthened censorship, and as a result output was mainly composed of vulgar commercial films. Furthermore, the

supply and demand situation was irregular, so that many films never made it into release. The filmmakers continued to demand freedom of expression, but their demands were buried by political and social problems. In the early 1980s, before the fifth revision of the Motion Picture Law, two trends emerged from the confusion. One was the film *Good Windy Day* (Lee Jang-ho, 1980), the first response to the changes and desires of the period. The other was the erotic film *The Aema Woman* (Jeong In-yeob, 1982), which opened the era of late-night screenings at the theaters. Conquering the new military regime's censorship policy with the exact opposite strategy, these two films express symbolically how the symptoms and obsessions of the 1980s encountered mainstream Korean cinema. If the former film challenged political taboos to put Korean cinema back in touch with the times, then the latter challenged sexual taboos as a distraction from the effects of the times. The fact that both films were followed by many sequels and spin-offs indicates that they were in tune with the desires of the times. Especially, in the case of the latter film, it was a natural outcome of the 3S (Sex, Screen, Sports) policy that was the foundation of the new military regime's cultural policy. Both films were all part of the natural trends brought on by the changes in the period. They were also internalizations of the eighties scene that reflected the new military regime's film policy—propagated from the top downwards—as well as the nationalistic cultural movement that spread from the bottom upwards. In this way, Korean cinema in the 1980s moved on through the struggle between progress and regression.

Changes in Substructure and Generations

In the mid 1980s, Korean cinema finally gained its long-hoped-for freedom in production. The opportunity came with a bigger crisis. In fact, the tendency to promote a monopolistic structure that affected the substructure of Korean cinema was ended with the fifth revision of the Motion Picture Law in late 1984, the corresponding Enforce-

ment Ordinance of July 1985, and the subsequent year's sixth revision. However, the main point of the double revision was the total opening up of the film market. The creation of opportunities for independent production after the dismantling of the monopolistic structure was only a measure the Korean industry took after opening up the market to foreign films. Korean cinema froze in fear as it faced direct distribution by foreign film companies (permitted by the sixth revision of 1986), without having time to fully enjoy its new freedom. The opening up of the domestic market to imports was not the result of an independent negotiating strategy within a multi-party framework of negotiation. Instead, it was an anti-cultural and anti-national measure that sacrificed cinema in order to delay US trade pressures for the opening up of the Korean market in the general manufacturing area. Consequently, Korean cinema was suddenly thrown into a *laissez faire* system after years of habituation to absolute government control over film had left it without any competitive abilities. When opposition to direct distribution by foreign distribution companies in Korea inspired filmmakers to organize and reflect on their circumstances, this provided the foundation for the later appearance of the Korean New Wave. However, it had no immediate results.

Twenty-three years after the first Motion Picture Law was promulgated in 1962, the freedom to establish film production companies and the activation of independent film production was finally made. This accelerated the changing of the guard from one generation to the next. Deflated by the sudden crack in the old system, the Yushin generation rapidly disappeared, creating a demand for new people to take their place. First of all, there was a group of directors who accommodated the sensibility of the times within the established framework of commercial film. Broadly speaking, this includes Im Kwon-taek and Lee Doo-yong, who started a new cinema aesthetics during this period. Other representative examples include Lee Jang-ho and Bae Chang-ho, who led the trends of the 1980s. Following them in the new mainstream of Chungmuro were Chung Ji-young,

Shin Seung-soo, Jang Gil-soo, Hah Myung-joong, and Park Chul-soo. The change of generations was completed with the appearance of directors like Jang Sun-woo, Park Kwang-su, Lee Myung-se, and Park Chong-won in the commercial cinema during the late 1980s. In particular, the appearance of the “Korean New Wave”—as they were called by foreign film festivals in the late 1980s—became possible when the independent cinema movement that tried to address real social problems from the early 1980s on encountered the fissures in the mainstream film industry.

The Film Industry Changes Its Thinking about Films.

The belief in reform that continued from the Gwangju Uprising of 1980 to the People’s Struggle of June 1987 against the Jeon Doo-hwan dictatorship and demanded democracy represents the spirit of the 1980s. (For about twenty days from 10 June 1987, more than five million people participated in demonstrations that eventually led to the dismantling of the authoritarian regime.) Confrontational films played a role by having an impact upon the mainstream film industry. Categorized as “non-institutional films” in the absence of the term “independent film” at the time, these confrontational films indicate the activist trend among young filmmakers who advocated “open cinema,” “popular film,” and “national cinema.” Their cultural movement films signified an aesthetic practice that overthrew the established cinema as well as a social practice that produced a critical audience rather than just consumers. These films were realist, in line with the spirit of the times not only in 1980s cinema aesthetics but also in culture in general.

The wave of social issue films in the mainstream film industry reflects the connections between it and the independent films. This tendency appears across a variety of genres and in mixed genre films. Tackling social contradictions and the structure of oppression by exploring the absurdities of contemporary reality was the primary trend distinguishing the 1980s from the 1970s. However, with the exception of a few

auteur films, most commercial films simply followed the trend rather than engaging in pointed critical analysis. Regardless of genre, many films simply combined social issue themes with the aesthetics of the Chungmuro style or Hollywood film grammar. However, the social issue films during this time, despite their imperfections, can be seen as models for Korean New Wave films. After having taken the trouble to work out how to combine a cinema with social responsibility, these achieved considerable success. (Lee Yeon-ho)



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1. *The Aema Woman* (Jeong In-yeob, 1982)
2. *Women Don't Fear the Night* (Kim Sung-soo, 1983)
3. *The Aema Woman 3* (Jeong In-yeob, 1985)
4. *The Stolen Apple Tastes Good* (Kim Su-hyeong, 1984)
5. *A Night of Burning Bone and Skin* (Cho Myung-hwa, 1985)

09

The New Korean
Cinema Movement

1988~1995



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1. *Chil-su and Man-su* (Park Kwang-su, 1988)
2. *The Age of Success* (Jang Sun-woo, 1988)
3. *North Korean Partisan in South Korea* (Chung Ji-young, 1990)
4. *Gagman* (Lee Myung-se, 1988)
5. *Out to the World* (Yeo Kyun-dong, 1994)

The Changing Territories of the Film Industry

From the mid 1980s, the environment of the Korean cinema began to go through a complete change. The government, pushed by general trends towards free trade, paved the way for the liberalization of foreign film import with the fifth revision of the Motion Picture Law in 1984. Furthermore, with the sixth revision in 1986, direct distribution was permitted for foreign film companies. Both revisions of the Motion Picture Law were designed to stall trade pressure from the United States. This meant that government policy had changed its direction from absolute control to noninterference.

The effects of liberalized foreign film importation and direct distribution were enormous. After production was liberalized in 1987, the number of Korean films produced increased steadily to 121 films in 1991. However, in 1993, it suddenly fell to 64 films. The signs of crisis were more visible in the market share rate. Korean cinema's share of the domestic box-office in the early 1980s reached around 40 per cent, but in 1993 it dropped to 15.9 per cent. On the other hand, the number of imported foreign films was only 27 in 1985 but increased to 347 films in 1993, which took 84.1 per cent of the market. At the same time, the pre-modern film distribution system started to undergo a major change. Since the period of Japanese rule, the budgets for film production had come from the exhibition and distribution sector. This reliance on box-office income strengthened the system of dividing the country outside Seoul into exclusive distribution and exhibition territories. Under such circumstances, the Korean film industry had to fight even harder against the effects of the liberalization of foreign film importation. In particular, the regionally divided distribution system made the accumulation of production budgets difficult. Since individual film companies had little control over the market and the film industry lacked internal integration, an abnormal structure was established where the production-distribution-box office performance-production cycle could not reproduce capital on a large scale and the interest generated from each stage

evaporated.

When large conglomerates (*chaebols*) invested in the film industry its topography changed fundamentally. From around the time of the 1988 Seoul Olympics, the video cassette recorder (VCR) became an everyday item in Korean homes. These were produced by *chaebols* like Samsung and Daewoo. Therefore, *chaebol* investment started to fund the film industry to ensure film production, which was essential for video software. Furthermore, the *chaebols* attempted to expand the market by adopting the theater-video-cable television order of distribution and exhibition. As the market grew, increased investment improved quality and revitalized the Chungmuro mainstream film industry, which had been about to run out of funds. In particular, when the acquisition costs for video rights skyrocketed, *chaebols* changed their strategy to mostly invest in distribution and production, as opposed to the previous approach of acquiring video rights to secure video contents.

The *chaebols* started to concentrate mostly on establishing distribution networks. This transformed the existing distribution network, which was divided into the Chungmuro network and US major companies network. Triggered mostly by Samsung and Daewoo, this change involved establishing theaters in major cities like Seoul and Busan under direct *chaebol* management as well as the leasing of other theater facilities.

The Change of Generations and the Korean New Wave

Along with the rest of the arts, the Korean film industry was going through a turbulent time in the late 1980s. Following the statement about present conditions signed by 96 filmmakers in 1987 and the struggle for the Film Promotion Law and against direct distribution of US films in 1988, a film industry reform movement grew. This movement was a great turning point in the mood of the Korean film industry, which had been defeatist throughout the Yushin regime between 1972 and 1979. This demonstrated that the belief in reform that had

continued from the Gwangju Democratic Uprising of 1980 to the People's Struggle of June 1987 was also present in the film industry in the spirit of the 1980s. As a force with its origins outside the film industry itself, it indicated that many young people who had formed an alternative camp outside Chungmuro were now flowing into Chungmuro, where they were making their presence felt. Most had participated in the university cinema movement, and they tried to make the cinema movement apparent within the industry by consciously avoiding the attitude of art for art's sake and by deeply getting involved in society.

Among the traditional Chungmuro directors, only Im Kwon-taek held on to his leading position. Directors like Park Kwang-su, Jang Sun-woo, and Chung Ji-young, who had created a small "Korean New Wave" outside Korea, had become Chungmuro's new major directors. However, the new young directors of the 1990s were different from the Korean New Wave directors. The Korean New Wave spoke out critically about contradictions within Korean society following dictatorship and division of the country. Compared to their predecessors, they showed greater awareness of film form. But new directors recognized after the 1990s concentrated more on small stories in real life settings or on genre. Lee Myung-se was a leader of this new generation, and he joined both of these trends.

Chaebol investment in the film industry transformed labor conditions. In the established Chungmuro film industry, film production deals were mostly made individually between the film company presidents and film directors. However, the acquisition managers of the *chaebols* preferred young film producers who understood young audiences over the presidents of Chungmuro film companies. Film companies were established outside Chungmuro with *chaebol* investment, and a series of commercially successful films was planned. During this time, the representative new mainstream producers were Shin Chul of Shincine Communications, Yoo In-taek of Kihweck Shidae, Inc., and Ahn Dong-kyu of Ahn's World Production. After making *Mister Mama*



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1. *Rosy Life* (Kim Hong-joon, 1994)
2. *Black Republic* (Park Kwang-su, 1990)
3. *The Marriage Story* (Kim Eui-suk, 1992)
4. *Oh, Dream Nation* (Jangsangot-mae, 1988) Poster
5. *Mister Mama* (Kang Woo-suk, 1992)

(1992) with Shincine, Kang Woo-suk established his own production company and made the phenomenal hit film *Two Cops* (1993). New comedy forms made these films hugely successful with the public. This genre had been absent from the mainstream of the Korean film industry for a long time. As Park Kwang-su, Jang Sun-woo, and Chung Ji-young confronted real life, younger directors took pains to prove themselves through genre experimentation.

Appearing as an interviewee in Jang Sun-woo's 1995 documentary *Cinema on the Road: A Personal Essay on Cinema in Korea*, Kim Hong-joon, the director of *Rosy Life* (1994), commented, "At a time when the traditional film industry has totally collapsed, it might be difficult to make any more films like *Mandala* (Im Kwon-taek, 1981). The idea of such a transformation worries me." When the film industry centered on the creators of film projects, worrying that old traditions and auteur films would disappear was justifiable. However, at least in the film industry during that time, the auteur directors were still actively at work.

The Development of Alternative and Independent Films

In 1988, *Oh, Dream Nation*, a film made by a creative group of independent filmmakers called Jangsangotmae, made a huge impact on the Korean cinema world, which did not clearly distinguish between mainstream and non-mainstream at the time. Depicting the pains of young people who witnessed the Gwangju Massacre, the film came as a shock to many people because it actually realized the production of an alternative cinema. So far, such a thing had been considered university movement theory only. Building on the success of *Oh, Dream Nation*, Jangsangotmae created great social concern with *Night before the Strike* (1990), which vividly depicted working people's struggle against capitalism. This film attracted many audience members through the alternative distribution network, which had expanded since *Oh, Dream Nation*. It was projected on temporary screens in universities and workplaces. There were efforts to ban its

screening and, in some cases, police helicopters even flew onto university campuses.

In addition, Kim Dong-won's *Sanggye-dong Olympic* (1988) was a magnificent achievement that showed alternative possibilities of the video medium. The film itself was a record of events related to the struggle against demolition in the Sanggye-dong area in Seoul, which was the flip side of the coin behind the successful opening of the 1988 Olympics. At first, Kim Dong-won followed an older university student into the neighborhood to volunteer, but as time went by he filmed the people and more or less moved into the neighborhood. He did not just record the struggles of the poor. Because he was not afraid of being one of the urban poor, he reached a special position in which creation and life became one. This film also proved that there is much potential in video, with its great mobility, as a medium to portray the lives of neglected people. Along with the medium's characteristic of being able to be copied without limit, it had great popularity in the university and labor scene. This documentary also played a decisive role in the prosperity of documentaries produced by organizations such as Labor News Production Group. (Kim Young-jin)

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The Growth and Outlook
of the Korean Cinema

1996~Present

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1. *Swiri* (Kang Je-kyu, 1999)
2. *Joint Security Area / JSA* (Park Chan-wook, 2000)
3. *Friend* (Kwak Kyung-taek, 2001)
4. *Oasis* (Lee Chang-dong, 2002)
5. *Chunhyang* (Im Kwon-taek, 2000)
6. *3-Iron* (Kim Ki-duk, 2004)
7. *Old Boy* (Park Chan-wook, 2003)

Growth in Quantity

Over the past decade, Korean cinema has shown incredible growth. Its renaissance has come after a long period of stagnation after the heyday of the 1960s. With regard to quantity, the number of films produced did not increase greatly but audiences for Korean films surged to ten million people for some films. The market share for Korean cinema was 23.1 per cent in 1996. In 1998 it increased to 35.8 per cent, and in 2001 it passed 50 per cent. Although Korean cinema was on a consistent upward curve from 1996, the success of *Swiri* (Kang Je-kyu, 1999) triggered a boom. Ever since *Swiri* became the biggest box-office hit in Korean film history, new records for Korean films have been set every year. Amid talk of “Korean blockbusters,” *Joint Security Area / JSA* (Park Chan-wook, 2000) and *Friend* (Kwak Kyung-taek, 2001) topped the box-office. *Silmido* (Kang Woo-suk) in 2003 and *Tae-guk-gi* (Kang Je-kyu) in 2004, inaugurated the ten million-audience era. Kang Woo-suk and Kang Je-kyu have played an important role in the box-office history of Korean films. Kang Woo-suk has directed many successful films from *Two Cops* in 1993 to *Silmido* in 2003. Furthermore, he has maintained his position as the leading figure in the Chungmuro scene from 1996 to 2004 while managing Cinema Service, a film production and distribution company. Kang Je-kyu extended the Korean film industry by establishing the coordinates of the Korean blockbuster film with *Swiri* and *Tae-guk-gi*. Second, the number of screens has boomed from 511 in 1996 to 1,648 in 2005. Multiplex theater chains such as CJ-CGV, Megabox, and Lotte Cinema have played a decisive role in this. Along with the increase in the number of screens, the “wide release” method was fully adopted at the turn of the century, making it easier to attract a large audience rapidly. *Silmido* and *Tae-guk-gi* were released simultaneously on about three or four hundred screens around the country—a third of the national total—making it possible to sell more than ten million tickets. Because they require heavy investment, multiplex theaters are founded upon large conglomerate (or *chaebol*) capital.

After the IMF crisis of 1997, the *chaebols'* hesitant advance into the Korean film industry accelerated with the building of the multiplex theaters. As a result, the power of *chaebol* capital represented by CJ Entertainment (belonging to Cheil Jedang Group) and Showbox (Orion Group) is strengthening.

Third, Korean films have begun to perform well in foreign markets. In 1996, the total export value of Korean films was around US\$400,000. However, in 2005, it was 190 times that amount, setting a new record of US\$76 million. In 2004, it was judged that the Korean television drama "*hallyu* (Korean wave, 韓流)" was emerging in the cinema too, and the total exports of Korean films showed an increase of 88 per cent over the previous year. Considering that expansion into foreign markets provides the opportunity to expand the scale of the Korean film industry and overcome the limits of the domestic market, the Korean film industry is looking for ways to make the most of the *hallyu* fever.

Growth in Quality

Great success has also been achieved in quality over the last decade. First, Korean cinema has achieved remarkable success at major international film festivals. In 2000, *Chunhyang* (Im Kwon-taek) was officially invited to compete at Cannes—a first in the Korean film history. In 2002, Im Kwon-taek received the Best Director Award at the Cannes Film Festival for *Chihwaseon*. In the same year, Lee Chang-dong and Moon So-ri won the Special Director's Award and the Marcello Mastroianni Award at the Venice International Film Festival for *Oasis*. In 2004, Park Chan-wook won the Grand Jury Prize at Cannes for *Old Boy*. In the same year, Kim Ki-duk was awarded the Best Director Award for *Samarian Girl* at Berlin and for *3-Iron* at Venice.

Second, many international film festivals, including Pusan International Film Festival (PIFF), Jeonju International Film Festival (JIFF), and Puchon International Fantastic Film Festival (PiFan), were launched and have been quite successful. In particular, since its 1996 launch

PIFF has grown into a film festival representing Asia, and its success has made Korean films known and well received worldwide.

Third, many new and noteworthy directors have come onto the scene. Hong Sangsoo and Kim Ki-duk are considered outstanding auteur directors. They both debuted in 1996, with *The Day a Pig Fell into a Well* and *Crocodile* respectively. Park Chan-wook rose to become a star commercial and artistic director with *Joint Security Area / JSA* and *Old Boy*. Other new directors include Hur Jin-ho of *Christmas in August* (1998), Lee Chang-dong of *A Peppermint Candy* (1999), Kim Jee-woon of *A Tale of Two Sisters* (2003), Bong Joon-ho of *Memories of Murder* (2003), and E J-yong of *Untold Scandal* (2003).

Fourth, the term “well-made film” came into being. With *Swiri*’s success, many high budget films claiming to be Korean blockbusters were made. However, they failed at the box-office one after another. On the other hand, although films like *Memories of Murder*, *Untold Scandal*, *A Tale of Two Sisters*, and *Old Boy*—all released in 2003—were not epic productions, they achieved unexpected box-office success and positive reviews. The term “well-made film” began to designate such films, and producers were able to achieve the utmost quality while striving for the most appropriate budget.

Fifth, the Korean Film Council (KOFIC) was launched on 8 May 1999. Transformed from the government-supported Korean Motion Picture Promotion Corporation (KMPPC) into a non-government organization, KOFIC has carried out various support programs for art films, independent films and short films in a systematic and rational way. As short film productions increased, many directors made their feature debut after being recognized for their talent in short films.

Possibilities and Limitations

Over the past decade, Korean cinema has definitely made a brilliant leap forward in quantity as well as in quality. However, there are a few issues that could be obstacles to future growth. First, there is polarization, whereby the audience comes together to see only one

specific film and as a result a small number of titles dominates the screens. On the week when *Silmido* recorded its ten millionth ticket sale, it shared about two thirds of the total number of screens together with *Tae-guk-gi*. The emergence of Korean blockbusters and the ten-million-audience film has amplified illusions about big films and box-office successes and small films are slowly losing ground. Although the network of movie theaters specializing in independent films, low budget films and art films called Artplus Cinema Network (renamed Nextplus Cinema Network in 2006) is in operation with support from KOFIC, there is little increase in the art film audience. In 2004, Korean and Hollywood films took 95.4 per cent of the total film market. And in the midst of joy over the ten-million-audience film, Kim Ki-duk's *3-Iron* and Hong Sangsoo's *Woman is the Future of Man* attracted only 95,000 and 285,000 people respectively across the nation. Under such circumstances, thematic film festivals like the Seoul Human Rights Film Festival, Women's Film Festival in Seoul, and Seoul Independent Film Festival, as well as organizations like the Korean Association of Cinematheques and Association of Korean Independent Film & Video, are all struggling hard to introduce various films from various eras and around the world.

Second, due to the audience preference for big budget films, the wide release method, and skyrocketing celebrity star power, production and marketing budgets are rising steeply. In 1996, the average budget for a Korean film did not exceed 1 billion *won* (US\$1,190,480), with 900 million for production and 100 million for marketing. However, the production and marketing budgets increased each to 2.8 billion (US\$2,705,314) and 1.4 billion *won* (US\$1,352,657) respectively, making the average total budget 4.2 billion *won* (US\$4,057,971) in 2004. Also, despite increased budgets, labor conditions and salaries have not improved much, and this is causing concern about a possible drying up of quality human resources in the film industry. Korean cinema has succeeded in attracting audiences by constantly working hard and searching for ways to make a variety

of films. But, after all these efforts, Korean cinema is on the verge of a crisis due to the rich-get-richer and the poor-get-poorer atmosphere prevalent in the film industry.

Nevertheless, the new noteworthy phenomenon is the active production of digital feature films. In particular, digital film production has made it possible to make low-budget feature films without entering the mainstream system. Key results are *My Generation* (2004) by Noh Dong-seok and *The Forgotten Child: Shin Sung-il is Lost* (2005) by Shin Jane, and *The Unforgiven* (2005) by Yoon Jong-bin. Furthermore, the Jeonju International Film Festival's "Digital Short Film by Three Film-makers" series has established itself as a significant trend-setting project in Asian cinema. Although there remains the issue of securing a distribution network, the possibility of independent and digital films as alternative media looks towards the next decade of Korean cinema. (Kim Kyoung-wook)

Four Variations on Korean Genre Film: Tears, Screams, Violence and Laughter

Chung Sung-ill

Motion Pictures arrive in Colonized Korea and Transplant Western Culture

There are no indigenous genres in the Korean cinema. Rather, they are all imitations of or variations on Western and other Asian film genres. Hollywood created the western, Japan developed the samurai film, and Hong Kong invented the martial arts film. In contrast, Korea merely accepted various film genres from other countries and modified them. When the country was under Japanese colonial rule, Korea had no control over which films were imported. Korea first encountered motion pictures when modern culture was literally transplanted into Korea. Films served as a window that showed the Western culture from outside the country and motion pictures gave Koreans who were still in a feudal society an indirect experience of Western capitalism. As a result, the Korean audience was left with two different feelings in the movie theater. On one hand, they admired the Western society that was far more advanced than their own. On the other hand, they feared, hated and despised the West (and its technology) for it seemed to have taken their nation away from them.

Korean cinema itself faced even greater difficulties. For one thing, Ko-

rea lacked the cultural background to understand films when they first arrived. Three variations of depicting the world had evolved over a long period of time elsewhere: perspectival painting, photography, and moving pictures. All three arrived in Korea at almost the same time. Similarly, the short story form that had a great impact on early film's narrative structure came to Korea at the same time as newspapers. Vaudeville, the nineteenth century theater show in which actors performed in front of a camera, and *comedia dell'arte* were introduced to Korea together as a kind of comedy genre. Film was not only a technological invention, but also the artistic culmination of 19th century modern culture, and it required some time to fully understand it.

Furthermore, Korea could not develop films related to its own traditional culture because film's arrival in the country coincided with colonization. Japan controlled the Korean film industry by censoring every single film. Korean films had to be made within the Japanese legal system that allowed the censoring of public screenings. Korean films inevitably started by imitating imported hit films to ensure a good box-office return while also conforming to Japanese judicial restrictions. At first, Korean films copied the entire story. However, operating by trial and error, the belated film industry chose to adopt genres to enable steady and rapid catching up with Western culture. Of course, this also led to some unwanted consequences. However, it took some time to realize that importing genres inevitably brought in Western ideology as well. Therefore, genres developed in a rather peculiar manner in Korea, as the country tried to embrace them and at the same time deny them through criticism. Most of all, regarding genre film as a synonym for commercial film and groundlessly criticizing any genre film was an obstacle to the development of genres and the discovery of auteurist films. For example, there are no big names to represent a genre in Korea as John Ford represents the western, Alfred Hitchcock the thriller, Douglas Sirk the melodrama, or Howard Hawks the comedy. (Of course, there are other genres. But here, I will discuss only melodra-

mas, horror films, action films, and comedies.)

Melodramas: The Return of Confucianism through the Restoration of Patriarchy and the Sacrifice of Women

Melodrama was the genre first adopted in Korea, and it enjoyed the greatest popularity for the longest time. There are three reasons for this. First, women were the first moviegoers in Korea. Even after modernization, most women, including those with jobs, did all the housework and men dominated society. Men were still under the Confucian belief that melodrama is a female genre and that shedding tears is not masculine. Therefore, most of these films were made for women. Entertainment was divided according to gender: sport was for men and film was for women. Second, most melodramas were based on popular novels whose readers were mostly women. Women audiences wanted to see the fantasy stories they read in books on screen. Youthful romances, domestic dramas and women's films depicting the ups and downs of women's lives became the most popular trends. Third, because melodrama focuses on the story and actors more than other genres, it did not require advanced filming techniques or expensive sets. In addition, Korean melodramas came close to the everyday life of Koreans, because the country's modern history was dramatic enough to be on screen. This enabled strong audience identification. This is how melodrama became the queen of all genres in Korea, and Korean movie star history the history of stars in popular melodramas.

However, the Korean melodrama was an exact copy of Japanese *shinpa* films to the extent that they were called “*namida* (tears, なみだ)” films, adopting the Japanese term for a tearjerker. Even after liberation, when Japanese films were strictly forbidden in Korea, plagiarism paradoxically persisted until the government allowed Japanese films back in 1998. In other words, melodrama brought in and modified Japanese melodramas and led Koreans to discover Korean cultural sentiments. The genre became so prevalent that in the 1980s it was almost impos-



Madame Freedom (Han Hyung-mo, 1956)



My Sassy Girl (Kwak Jae-yong, 2001)



A Public Cemetery below the Moon
(Kwon Chul-hwi, 1967)

sible to find a director who did not make melodramas. Other genres even adopted melodrama in their own way and repeated the pattern of women's sacrifice and the restoration of patriarchy. Even directors considered key auteurs, such as Kim Ki-young, Yu Hyun-mok, and Lee Man-hee, all made melodramas. (Although later directors such as Jang Sun-woo and Park Kwang-su did not make melodramas, can we really say their films are completely untouched by emotion?) Melodramas boomed in the 1960s, also known as the heyday of the Korean film industry, in response to audience expectations that Korean film quality would finally reach new heights after the invention of sound films. The melodramas of the 1960s were characterized by either Cinderella-style happy endings or Ophelia-style tragedies, and featured either modern women in traditional families under the influence of the Korean War or love stories between the rich and the poor created by Western capitalism. Of course, tragic endings were by far the more common. Perhaps it is cruel that tragic melodrama evokes stronger empathy and that these films comfort the public with their real-life problems. In a story with a happy ending, problems are resolved, albeit hypocritically. On the other hand, in a tragic story, the main character tries to escape their contradictions either by isolating or destroying him or herself. The origin of this conflict comes not from class difference but from the restoration of patriarchy. When capitalist society allowed women to work, feudal society under crisis demanded the restoration of patriarchy. In fact, even today, Korean melodrama strongly advocates the restoration of patriarchy and demands women's voluntary sacrifice and acquiescence in the process, sometimes subjecting them to adultery or pregnancy outside marriage. This draws a clear line between their degraded bodies and pure spirits (Here, women's careers become a very sensitive topic, as seen in the hostess melodramas of the 1970s initiated by *Wedding Dress in Tears*). The judiciary of a modern country does not protect those who make voluntary sacrifices and acquiesce. This absence of legal protection is the happy ending that re-

assures men after the restoration of all their power. There is not a single film in which a woman divorces her husband, bankrupts him, and leaves him with another man to start a new life. Unfortunately, modern women's utopia is never realized in melodramas. On the surface, the films may have simulated utopia, but this was just a way of bringing them back into the family circle. Believe it or not, in terms of ideology, *My Sassy Girl* (Kwak Jae-yong, 2001), which depicts a girl in the Internet era, is no different from *Madame Freedom* (Han Hyung-mo, 1956), which is set after the Korean War ceasefire of 1953.

Horror Films, Social Repression and the Return of the Grudge: Who Is Coming Back?

Turning to horror, action and comedy films after defining melodrama leads us to realize that these three genres are variations on the melodrama. First, I will discuss horror films. Korean horror movies are different from 1950s Hollywood B movies, German expressionist films, and Japanese horror films. Nor are they like classic horror film's icons such as Dracula or Frankenstein. Korean horror films rarely depict supernatural phenomena, aliens, monsters, killers, zombies, or lunatics (Few of the Korean horror movies that have imported such scary beings have gained popularity). Instead, the ghost in Korean horror films is a spirit who died with regrets or as a result of injustice. Most are female. (Oddly, it is hard to find male ghosts like Shakespeare's ghost of Hamlet's father in Korean horror movies.) They come back to haunt their murderers or plead their case. As they usually lived a life of repression in a patriarchal family as a daughter-in-law or a daughter forced to sacrifice, and return to haunt their husband or father, this makes the genre a variation on the melodrama.

A Public Cemetery below the Moon (Kwon Chul-hwi, 1967) is a perfect example. An ex-*gisaeng* (female entertainer) called Wol-hyang marries into a wealthy family, but she cannot overcome class difference and eventually dies as a result of her mother-in-law's abuse and lies. She comes

back from the grave, not to take revenge but to win her love back from her husband by dispelling suspicion. Although horror films were made every summer, they never became a mainstream genre. The public felt uncomfortable about them. Moreover, Confucian culture found screaming in public and enjoying such films very vulgar. Film reviews and journals paid little attention to horror movies. In addition, government suppression and media control suspended the production of horror films entirely during the 1980s. Twenty years of censorship forced the public to turn away from horror movies. Korean society was already full of sorrow.

It is significant that the horror film *Whispering Corridors* (Park Ki-hyung) did not appear before the summer of 1998, which was the inauguration year of the Kim Dae-jung administration marking the true end of the era of military dictatorship. However, this film did not stray too far from Korean traditional ghost movies and the return of the repressed. After its big success, four sequels had been made by 2005. The greatest achievement of the movie was bringing the horror genre back to the public and confirming to the public that they could enjoy the genre. The most prominent phenomenon in the Korean film industry in the 21st century is the production of horror films every summer as a mainstream genre. Nevertheless, it is still difficult to say for certain that horror films have stepped out of the shadow of melodrama and its patriarchal ideology. In other words, the horror genre has only been reproducing the melodrama without displaying its deeply buried intent to overthrow social structures.

Action Films: Nostalgia for Paternal Authority or Worship of and Obedience to Power in the Post-War Era

If the horror film is a female melodrama emphasizing family reunion, the action film is a male melodrama emphasizing social restructuring. The Korean action genre has no connection to the Hollywood gangster film or film noir. It is more like a Korean version of the Japanese



Whispering Corridors (Park Ki-hyung, 1998)



Gallant Man (Kim Hyo-chun, 1969)



General's Son (Im Kwon-taek, 1990)

yakuza gangster film by way of the Hollywood western. However, Korean action films usually have emotional heroes, but they are nothing but street punks. They are vindicated in the films, but illegal in the real world. Action films started to bloom in the late 1950s with director Chung Chang-wha (Hong Kong name: Cheng Chang Ho) and they unfolded against the backdrop of actual social history rather than developing independently as a genre. They depicted militants fighting for independence under Japanese colonization, refugees after the Korean War, or gangsters who were forced on the streets amid modernization. Most of the successful action films in the 1960s are so similar that they seem like a series. Action stars such as Jang Dong-he repeated the same persona from one film to the next, and tropes such as friendship and betrayal of men and sacrifice in the name of loyalty that even overruled love were also constants.

There were three aspects to this phenomenon. First, by centering on men the films accentuated brotherhood and expressed a yearning for strong fathers. Living in a fast-paced world, they wanted to go back to a conservative society where a strong father made all the important decisions and gave the orders. That is why Korean action films are extremely loyal to group structures and rules. Betrayal was considered the worst sin. And yet, is not betrayal the only way of leaving a gang? The Korean action film is a genre of irony and the abandonment of social justice. That is why film gangsters choose to commit even greater sins to avoid the worst sin, which leads to sacrificial death. In that moment of choice, action films reach a sentimental climax. Of course, they are unable to deal with anything that lies beneath that sentimental choice. This is also the moment of confirming the impotence of Korean men in the face of modernization.

The second aspect of the Korean action film is the worship of the powerful regardless of any judicial judgment. The Korean saying “the fist comes before the law” is the fundamental sentiment that lies beneath Korean action films. This saying also conveys distrust of so-

cial justice and the attempt to resolve an issue by force rather than by justice in the face of collusion between interested parties. This is the fundamental emotion of the generation that came to the city in the post-war era only to be evicted out onto the streets again. The Korean people lost their homes twice. Half the Korean people lost their homes as a result of the division of the nation after the Korean War. Some others lost their homes because of the destruction of agricultural society in the name of modernization. Instead of offering opportunities, cities exploited these people's cheap labor to accumulate more wealth. Social conflicts and contradictions generated in this process are portrayed with violence in the action film. The most prominent and distinctive characteristic of the Korean action film is the emotion of homelessness. A case in point is the *Gallant Man* series (1969~1970), in which men from all corners of the country come together to fight against injustice. The different dialects in the film gave energy to the action genre and led the series to become a big hit.

The third aspect of the Korean action film is the display of male power in the face of crisis. Action films often consider physical strength built by intensive training as a form of spiritual elevation. The female workforce grew rapidly in the 1960s and men's social dominance started to come under threat. Quite a number of women started to take over from men as head of the household. As more and more women replaced men in society, men were forced out of jobs. Korean action films are nostalgic for the powerful men of the past. Therefore, the twisted values of feudalism and Confucian ideology were almost inevitably included in action films.

However, with the import of the Hong Kong martial arts films *Dragon Inn* (King Hu, 1966) and *One-Armed Swordsman* (Chang Che, 1967) after 1966, Korean action films started to focus on martial arts techniques, losing their national identity. The culmination of a new style of action films in the 1970s came with Lee Doo-yong's *Manchurian Tiger* (1974). Even these, however, were merely clumsy copies of Hong Kong ac-

tion films, particularly Bruce Lee films. Korean filmmakers' collaboration with Hong Kong's Shaw Brothers and Golden Harvest nearly destroyed the genre in Korea, as is indicated by the total absence of notable action films in the 1980s. Im Kwon-taek's *The General's Son* (1990) restored the action film. The film was the most successful film that year and it made the action film a popular genre again. Mysteriously, however, these action films were a return to the gangster films of the 1960s. Kwak Kyung-taek's *Friend* (2001) was a big hit based on nostalgia. Ryoo Seung-wan is a rare case of a director who defined himself as an action film director and made efforts to revive the genre. In this process, male power is restored repeatedly and with melo-dramatic sentimentalism (Yoo Ha's *Spirit of Jeet Keun Do - Once Upon a Time in High School* [2004] is a good example). That is why action films, despite continued efforts, remain buried under the weight of reactionary memories.

Comedies: Laughter without Humor, or Hybrid Genre

Korean comedy is a hybrid genre without its own identity. There is no traditional slapstick comedy in Korean cinema, probably because there is no tradition of the circus in Korea (both Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton were circus performers). In fact, slapstick comedy evolved out of the circus, but the circus that came to Korea with modernization did not connect with the cinema. Instead, comedy films started in Korea after the invention of sound. The genre developed under the influence of Japanese petit bourgeois comedy (*shomin geki*) films. That is why almost all of the 1960s comedy films portray petit bourgeois families. The stories are variations on melodramas, only with happy endings and a bright and cheerful atmosphere. The boundary between melodrama and the comedy film was vague at the time. Most of the audience sought catharsis through tragic stories and regarded comedy as low class. Partly, this was the result of the impact of shinpa melodramas on the uneducated public, but more importantly, it was due to the shortage of good comedy films. Most of all, Korean comedy films



Two Cops (Kang Woo-suk, 1993)



My Wife is a Gangster (Jo Jin-kyu, 2001)



Foul King (Kim Jee-woon, 2000)

lacked satirical spirit. And this was not the fault of cinema itself, but the result of the censorship that suppressed the Korean cinema for a long period of time. Moreover, even that short history of comedy films came to an end when the small cohort of comedy actors moved over to television with the opening of broadcasting stations in the late 1960s. After that, comedy only continued on television as comic soap operas and single-act plays for almost twenty-five years. If I were to pick a comedy film of the 1980s, I would have to go with *Byun Kang-swoi* (Um Jong-sun, 1986) and the variations on it, which constituted a very peculiar form of traditional erotic film.

Kang Woo-suk brought comedy back into Korean films by teaching the audience how to laugh with the comedy-action mix in *Two Cops* (1993). It is quite significant that comedy came back to Korea with the bubble economy. Laughter seemed to connect the public to the films. Comedy films actually took their place in Korean cinema as late as the 1990s. However, these comedy films leant on melodramatic emotions. If the mainstream 1960s comedy film was a kind of domestic melodrama, in the 1990s it was a variation on the romantic melodrama. Therefore, it seems almost impossible to expect Korean comedy films to produce the sting of satirical laughter at the world. Moreover, it is still too difficult for Korean comedy films to beat television comedy dramas, which have enjoyed a long history. (Is there a comedy film comparable to the television drama, *My Name is Kim Sam-soon*?) Even today, comedy films have not yet found their identity. They are still a hybrid of various genres, trying to produce laughter by playing on other genres—think of *Marrying the Mafia* (2002), *Kick the Moon* (2001), or *My Wife is a Gangster* (2001). At the same time, the comedy genre is trying to find its own potential (Here we can think of *No. 3* [1997], *The Foul King* [2000], or *Barking Dogs Never Bite* [2000]). In this sense, comedy has just begun to write its own history.

And.....

Of course, Korean cinema also features a variety of other genres. Underneath Korean popular culture lies the life of the Korean public on the peninsula, struggling through the modernization of the country. However, Korean film genres only treat this topic conservatively by way of social restructuring. In addition, as most of these genres were imported, distortions and changes seem to have been inevitable. Thus, it is difficult to conclude that the popularity of certain Korean films is an exact reflection of modern history. Korean genre films need more reflective introspection to achieve historical vitality. Only then will they become truly popular, and it is not yet the right time.

The Genealogy of Shinpa Melodramas in Korean Cinema

Lee Soon-jin

The Beginnings of Korean Cinema and *Shinpa* Melodrama in the Colonial Period

In discussions of Korean cinema, the term “*shinpa*” refers to second-class or outdated melodramas. However, in the early twentieth century, the term referred to “new wave” as opposed to “old” theatrical plays. *Shinpa* originated in Japan, and the *shinpa* troupes led by Im Sung-ku, Kim Do-san and Lee Ki-se produced adaptations of Japanese plays. These *shinpa* troupes initiated filmmaking in colonial Korea with “*ki-no-dramas*” that interspersed stage plays with filmed scenes. As Im Hwa points out, “the reliance on another art form in the earliest stages of Korean filmmaking” (*Chunchoo* magazine, No. 10, November 1941) had an enormous impact on the Korean cinema.

First, the “encounters” between stage plays and films persisted for a long time. Not only the kino-dramas but also the prologues and epilogues that showed some film scenes in theaters, the attraction shows performed by singers and dancers at the start of film screenings, and sound as well as silent films that toured with narrators all prevailed widely and lasted for quite a long time, even after liberation. A new film generation emerged with the introduction of sound films in 1935 and pursued originality for the Korean cinema. For them, that meant



Ohmongnyeo (Na Woon-kyu, 1937)



The Snow Falling Night (Ha Han-soo, 1958)



The Lullaby (Ha Han-soo, 1958)

reducing its dependence on theater. They renamed the form of cinema that still depended on theatrical plays as *shinpa* and regarded it as unartistic and outmoded. The silent film star Na Woon-kyu represented the *shinpa*. His sound film *Arirang* III (1936) was accused of “copying *shinpa* plays” and *Ohmongnyeo* (1937) was actually criticized for “targeting low-class fans to sell more tickets” (*Chosun Ilbo* newspaper, 20 January 1937). During this period, cinema based on a related form of art was known as *shinpa* and audiences who enjoyed film screenings that integrated the theatrical stage with film were called “low-class” fans.

Yet, as long as it designates new as opposed to old theatrical plays, *shinpa* reflects the modern ideas that had arrived in colonized Korea, albeit via transplantation. The Korean cinema that developed out of *shinpa* inherited the modern perspective. Lee Young-il points out that “early films and plays shared the pattern of portraying a family conspiracy concerning an intellectual who studied abroad,” and that this was “a kind of modernism in kino-dramas” (2004, p. 65). Kang Young-hee explains in her 1989 master’s thesis at Seoul University that “antinomy” is the core characteristic of *shinpa*. Antinomy, referring to contradiction or opposition between two values, describes the pain and confusion of the public caught in the struggle between outdated pre-modern and new modern values. The main character in *shinpa* falls into a dilemma and his context usually makes the choice for him. The dependent self feels helpless, confused and troubled, and such feelings lead to defeatism and excessive emotionalism. In other words, *shinpa* is a form of melodrama that shows the collision of the modern and pre-modern worlds with defeatism and emotionalism in colonized Korea.

Drawing a Line between Melodrama and *Shinpa*: *Shinpa* films in the late 1950s

Lee Young-il divides the melodramas of the 1950s into “contemporary melodrama” and “*shinpa*” (2004, p. 248 and 266). What is the difference between the two? As the modifier “contemporary” suggests,



Love Me Once Again (Jung So-young, 1968)



A Moment to Remember (John H. Lee, 2004)



You're My Sunshine! (Park Jin-pyo, 2005)

the difference is in the relationship to time.

After the liberation, Korea was flooded with American pop culture, and after the Korean War, South Korea was rapidly Americanized. Korea depended on the US economically and culturally. In the late 1950s, the audience learned new fashion from American films and started establishing new sensibilities. The fashionable melodramas that started with *Madame Freedom* (Han Hyung-mo, 1956) were the outcome of this trend.

However, a large proportion of popular culture was still *shinpa*. After the 1930s, *shinpa* was continued by commercial troupes such as Shinmudae and Chosunyeongeuksa, the Dongyang Theater's plays such as *Being Lucky Neither at Cards nor at Love*, and the record companies' musical ensembles. The kino-drama also persisted, albeit on the periphery. In the 1950s, the kino-drama all of a sudden made a comeback and rejoined the mainstream of Korean cinema. Lee Young-il refers to an unexpected flood of *shinpa* in this period. However, considering the continued *shinpa* in the theater, maybe this development did not come out of the blue.

During the restoration period after the war, Korean cinema grew exponentially. In this period, stage stars rushed to the screen in search of audiences. Many actors, producers, directors, art directors, and lighting directors had theatre backgrounds. Film plots were adapted from theatrical plays and filmed using theatrical skills. In other words, the flood of 1950s *shinpa* was the result of theatrical artists shifting into the cinema.

The theater star Jeon Ok of the 1950s is a typical example. The heads of Baekjogageukdan troupe, Jeon Ok and her husband, established a film company and made popular plays into films such as *A Night of Harbor* (Kim Hwa-rang, 1957), *The Snow Falling Night* (Ha Han-soo, 1958), *The Tears of Mokpo* (Ha Han-soo, 1958) and *The Lullaby* (Ha Han-soo, 1958). Her films were known as typical *shinpa* films and distinguished from the melodramas made by Hong Seong-ki and Kim Ji-

mee. Jeon Ok, who had trained herself on the stage with singing and dancing, seemed to act in an exaggerated manner, and the stories from the colonial period were regarded as outdated. Yet her films gained popularity, because national division and the Korean War provided further stimulus for *shinpa* production. The defeatism and exaggerated emotionalism of *shinpa* was continued into war stories. The peculiar style adapted from the stage included standardized sets, the *mise-en-scène*, prolonged long shots, exaggerated acting and makeup, background music to arouse emotions, singing actors, monologues, and too much voiceover narration.

Modernization and *Shinpa* in the 1960s

Interestingly, the *shinpa* genre was marginalized once again in the 1960s, as it had been in the 1930s. The entrepreneurial spirit and industrialization of the late 1950s, the rise of a new generation of filmmakers including Shin Sang-ok, Kim Ki-young and Yu Hyun-mok, their theories of film art, the emergence of classical Hollywood filmmaking as something Korean cinema had to learn, and the neo-realist spirit all combined to push *shinpa* to the edge. With *shinpa* being condemned as a colonial hangover, its critics never had to justify themselves.

Family melodrama and youth films took over the mainstream from *shinpa*. Forced out of the cinema, *shinpa* could not even return to the stage, because cinema had taken over from the stage as the key entertainment in the 1950s. As a result, *shinpa* remained only as fragments of melodramas, or mere style. The remaining issue was to what extent this *shinpa* style was used in any particular film, because contemporary film critics harshly condemned any trace of *shinpa* as low-class and anachronistic.

However, *shinpa* made another comeback in the late 1960s. *Love Me Once Again* (1968, Jung So-young) signaled this revival. The return of the *shinpa* was still bitterly attacked, but the commercial success of *Love Me Once Again* and its sequels was so great that such criticism could eas-

ily be ignored.

1960s *shinpa* were different from their predecessors in two ways. First, they did not depend on the encounter with the theatrical stage. Although characteristics from the 1950s such as exaggeration of acting, illogical narration, and excessive background music remained, the *shinpa* style of 1960s film was more cinematic, using camera movement, zooms, original music scores, and cause-and-effect narrative structures. However, such characteristics were still regarded as “outdated and low-class” in the 1960s.

Second, the class conflict that developed with industrialization and patriarchal oppression both appeared in the *shinpa* films of the time. Lee Young-il points out, “While *shinpa* of the colonial period featured Japanese military or a loan shark who took the Japanese side, those of the 1950s depicted prostitutes in slums, and those of the 1960s took place in living rooms or the house of a company president” (2004, p. 268). In this living room or house of a company president lived a perfect bourgeois family composed of a competent father, a wise mother, and lovely children. People who might break this perfect family like a single mother or prostitutes and their children were pushed out of society and had to suffer poverty and deprivation. There was no hope left for change in this unequal world. Such defeatism and emotionalism made a space for the return of *shinpa*. With the public fighting poverty and deprivation just like the heroes in the films, *shinpa* took over the mainstream again. Most melodramas simply became *shinpa* films, and even horror films and action films adopted the style. Only some scenarists and critics who had studied western modern films and believed themselves to be sensible artists did not approve of the return to *shinpa* style.

For today's audiences, most of the films of the 1970s, including even new generation films by Lee Jang-ho, Kim Ho-sun and Ha Kilchong, would seem full of *shinpa* style. This shows that the concept responds to the times. However, the audience of the 1970s did not see contemporary films as *shinpa*. If outdated films were called *shinpa*, then all old Korean films would be *shinpa*. Among the determining characteristics of *shinpa* films such as a sense of the times, connections to the stage, pessimism, and excessive emotionalism, the last is the only aspect recognized by today's audiences as *shinpa*. Thus, critics find the *shinpa* style in 1997 melodramas as well as the latest films such as *A Moment to Remember* (John H. Lee, 2004) and *You're My Sunshine!* (Park Jin-pyo, 2005). Yet, if excessive emotionalism were the only factor that characterized *shinpa*, most melodramas would fall into the category. While *shinpa* is an important keyword in the history of Korean cinema, it may have become too empty to be useful for understanding today's cinema.

The Debates around Realism in the Korean Cinema

Kim Soh-youn

The Colonial Period: The Dialectic of Proletarianism and Realism

Whether addressing overall history or individual films, realism characterizes Korean film historiography. The critics first introduced realism during the colonial period. Terms such as “proletarian realism,” “materialist dialectical creation,” and “socialist realism” were all current then, and they were intended to advance the proletarian cause under the slogan of Bolshevism, as well as enlighten and mobilize the general public. Therefore, the critics pointed out anti-proletarian ideas and the lack of socialist ideology in the films of colonized Korea. Realism was absolutely necessary to understand reality. But that did not mean portraying reality as it appeared was sufficient. Rather, the key to proletarian realism was both the vision of a socialist future and an educational effect. As film professionals used the concept of realism to mean the representation of “reality,” realism was of course only defined in terms of themes. This kind of realism that centered on the representation of “social reality” had a broad effect on Korean cinema.



Open City (Roberto Rossellini, 1946)



The Bicycle Thief (Vittorio De Sica, 1948)



An Aimless Bullet (Yu Hyun-mok, 1961)

The 1950s: New Korean Realism and Humanism

In the 1950s' cinematic discourse, the realism based on representation that dominated the colonial and post-liberation eras continued. But, at the same time, the earlier proletarian realism was deployed more selectively. The "new" realist discourse emerged to provide a new ideology in the mid and late 1950s after the peninsula was divided and the Korean film community was rebuilt. The *Younghwa Segye* magazine ran a feature story titled "A Comparison of Korean and Italian Realism" in its February 1957 issue, stimulating debate about "Korean realism." The authors wrote that an excess of period films and melodramas constituted a crisis in Korean cinema. Huh Baek-nyun argued for "neo-realism" and Yu Du-yeon argued that "Korean realism" should replace naturalistic realism. In particular, Yu said "The essence of realism should capture the 'truth' of Koreans, who had to have a 'resistance' mindset during the colonial period," and also that, "local style needs to be combined with the 'resistance' mindset to represent the 'Korean reality'." In the realist discourse of the 1950s, resistance and struggle were directed at the "tragic modern era" that might explode because of one hydrogen bomb. This existential insecurity was close to idealism. This mentality was probably because of our war experiences and because western realist discourse was introduced to Korea via Japan.

At the same time, Italian neo-realism was suggested as a standard for a new Korean realism, particularly following the success of *Open City* (Roberto Rossellini, 1946) and *The Bicycle Thief* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948). This favorable assessment of neo-realism's potential was based on shared post-war poverty; a high evaluation of the aesthetic elements of "realism" that were believed to have legitimacy and universality; and a desire to develop the Korean film industry rapidly, just as Italy had done with its limited resources.

The realism discourse of the 1950s, even though depoliticized, somehow played the role of a progressive discourse at a time when left-wing creativity was blocked. First of all, realism could be considered



Oh, Dream Nation (Jangsangotmae, 1988)



Chil-su and Man-su (Park Kwang-su, 1988)



The Marriage Story (Kim Eui-suk, 1992)

as serious high art and not just a way of escaping reality or a mere entertainment. Furthermore, realism could be used as an alibi for maintaining democratic participation by directly dealing with social issues amidst strict censorship. Advocating Korean realism also worked as a strategy to ensure the continued legitimacy of national realism, which had started with Na Woon-kyu's *Arirang* (1926). This realism that was formed at the end of the 1950s dominated Korean cinema discourse until left-wing creativity began to revive in the 1980s.

From the 1960s to the 1970s: Extending to Aesthetic Realism

The post-war era tended to emphasize “humanistic” themes over technology and film language. However, soon enough, neo-realist aesthetics began to emerge as an alternative to Soviet montage as well as the sophisticated technology of American movies that critics of the time considered popular and entertaining. Afterwards, “Korean realist aesthetics” developed rapidly, influenced by the surrealist concept of “photogénie” that had been revived in the 1950s as part of the *Nouvelle Vague*, the New American Cinema, and British documentary. Significantly, new trends in world cinema were broadly viewed in relation to the concepts of “realism”, “reality,” or even “humanism.” Unlike the opposite concept of montage, photogénie was treated as a concept emphasizing the expressive power of the image itself, because critics understood photogénie as connected to the “accountability” or “documentary characteristics” of neo-realist aesthetics. As a result, Korean cinema criticism was dominated by a simple logic where cinematic art was guaranteed by realism and the aesthetic identity of realist cinema was guaranteed by the use of the long shot and long-take combination.

The 1980s to the mid 1990s: The Switch to Social Realism

During the democracy movement sparked by the Gwangju Uprising in 1980, college film groups began to consider cinema as a cultural

movement. Film had to become a “cinema movement” devoted to the task of transforming Korean society. Progressive filmmakers began to think about what the “new Korean cinema” should be, and decided on a social realism. This would be a “cinema that speaks openly and from a progressive point of view about the hardships of history, sufferings as a result of colonization, oppressed people, false consciousness resulting from undemocratic and inhumane power, and the exploitation of labor and sex” (Lee Jung-ha, 1988, p. 119). This kind of new Korean cinema, dubbed “national cinema,” expressed strong disapproval of Hollywood movies and mainstream movies under the slogans of anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism. “Realism” was called upon once again as the direction of this new cinema. The objective of this new realism was to make people observe reality and structural contradiction and think about directions for change while they watched movies. Lukacsonian realism, the style of non-Hollywood art films, and the third world cinema movement were cited as possible exemplars.

Realism formed through the underground cinema movement created two possible models for realist cinemas of the time. Both independent films totally separated from Hollywood cinema practice and Chungmu-ro’s capital as well as auteurist films born after the dark decade of the 1970s were justified as realist cinema. Whatever direction they took, ultimately they arrived at social realism.

The mid 1990s to the present

The success of *Marriage Story* (Kim Eui-suk) in 1992 changed the landscape of Korean cinema. With large conglomerates investing in the film industry and postmodernism expanding its influence, Korean cinema faced a proliferation of genres and genre filmmaking, as a result of which realist aesthetics fell by the wayside. There are no longer critics who openly call for realism. However, many critics still expect Korean cinema to deal with the reality of Korean society. In this regard, we can assume that dependence on realism still persists, albeit passively.

Freedom of Speech and Cinema: The History of Korean Film Censorship

Im Sang-hyeok

Conflicts between individual expression and restrictive institutions have always existed regardless of time and place. In fact, no country in the world defines the controversial concept of freedom of speech clearly, due to the differing extents of freedom as well as the constant changes of society itself.

In particular, films came under strict control after their introduction in Korea, because they had great impact on the public with their great popularity and their vivid audio-visual effect. The censorship of Korean cinema has changed according to the government's attitude toward films and the social structure. In addition, as films have developed into an industry, freedom of speech has become not only an ideological issue, but also a demand from the film world that the government has had to pay attention to.

Before the Motion Picture Law

Film was first brought to the Korean Empire (1897~1910) towards the end of the Chosun dynasty. With its great popularity, it was a good means of introducing Western culture as well as high technology. In the early years, the intervention of the government was confined to general police action aimed merely at the prevention of fire or theft,

as many audiences gathered in dark places. However, when the country was put under Japanese rule in 1910 and Korean films were being made in quantity, the government started controlling ideas. Censorship on films began with the enactment of the “Entertainment and Entertainment Venue Regulation” (1922) followed by the “Motion Picture and Film Censorship Regulation” (1926). The government wielded its power against nationalist films or political films. During the Second World War, films were used as a means of war propaganda or instilling ideology. Therefore, film censorship was strengthened with the “Chosun Film Decree” (1940), which focused on censoring films that might damage the status or image of the Japanese Empire. Films that hindered any war objective or glorified the enemy, including America, were prohibited.

After the liberation and the setting up of the US military administration, the government newly established in August 1948 promoted its ideology through films. Naturally, films were controlled by the Public Information Office and the Ministry of National Defense (during the Korean War). In 1955, jurisdiction went to the Ministry of Culture and Education and the “Regulation for the Censorship of Public Performances” was passed. After the Democratic Revolution on 19 April 1960, a private organization called the Films Ethics Committee was established for the first time. However, this did not last long, due to the military coup on 16 May 1961. During this period, new government organizations and ideological confrontations between the right and left wings fueled confusion. In other words, the nation was not yet ready to think about the specific role of film as an autonomous social institution.

The Motion Picture Law

During the Third Republic (1961~1972), a number of regulations and systems were established, based on authoritarian administration. The first basic law for films, the Motion Picture Law (Act 995) was passed

in 1962. Film censorship took the form of granting permission before filmmaking by the Minister for Public Information. The Motion Picture Law was composed of three basic rules, i.e. the requirement of approval before filmmaking, the registering of filmmakers, and the requirement of government endorsement before exporting or importing films. This had nothing to do with promoting Korean culture, but was designed to control public ideas and instill anti-communist ideology. For over thirty years of the military government, control over films was strengthened as a means of maintaining and promoting the administration.

The revised constitution of 26 December 1962 clearly specified film “censorship” in the name of more effective regulation. The revised Motion Picture Law (Act 1830, 1966) required reporting of filmmaking activity itself and pre-censorship of screenplays, setting up a double censorship system. Any filmmakers not abiding by the regulations were ordered to stop their work. The Motion Picture Law stipulated basic rules for censorship. With the revision of the Public Performance Law on 31 December 1975, the Korea Performance Ethics Board was established. Although it appeared to be a private organization, it was run and supported by the Ministry of Culture. The establishment of the Board simply meant outright censorship by the government. This institution lasted for twenty years, until a ruling of the Constitutional Court in 1996. The Korean cinema had to endure a long dark period due to the ever-strengthening Motion Picture Law and the so-called Yushin (“revitalizing reform”) Constitution of the Fourth Republic.

Censorship was abolished with the fifth revision of the Motion Picture Law (Act 3776, 31 December 1984), following the prohibition of censorship by the revised Constitution of the Fifth Republic. Instead, a “pre-deliberation” system was adopted. However, the revised regulation only reflected the constitutional principle on paper, and in essence censorship remained unchanged. In other words, deliberation on films

was almost the same as censorship in terms of subjects, standards, and process. Films against anti-communist ideology or the government were not allowed to be screened or even made. The only new thing was that some erotic films were allowed, reflecting the overall democratization mood and a more open attitude towards sex. However, such erotic films fueled controversy about lewdness and led to the periodic control of such films. The public ended up getting the idea that Korean films were low-class and turned their back on them. Meanwhile, films started to reflect the public desire for democracy with the democratization movement in June 1987. Though such films were strictly controlled by the government, they led the public to feel angry about freedom of expression, which laid the groundwork for the Constitutional Court's ruling in 1996.

The Film Promotion Law

The Film Promotion Law (Act 5129) of 30 December 1995 replaced the Motion Picture Law. It stipulated pre-deliberation by the Performance Ethics Board in Article 12, which was very similar to the previous deliberation regulation. However, a new clause was inserted that exempted short films (less than forty minutes) and small-gauge films (under 16mm) from any deliberation. The pre-deliberation system was changed following the Constitutional Court ruling on 4 October 1996. The court concluded it was unconstitutional, as the deliberation system fell under the category of pre-censorship, which the constitution prohibits.

The government quickly amended the Film Promotion Law (Act 5321) and introduced a rating system. Films had to be rated by the Korea Performing Art Promotion Commission, and the decision could be held back for six months in the name of preventing any side effects from the rating system. The rating system was only a stopgap measure, and it did not make any fundamental change. Therefore, the Constitutional Court ruled the Commission unconstitutional too, much as with

the previous censoring institution on 16 September 1999.

Just before the ruling, the government revised the Film Promotion Law (Act 5929, 8 February 1999) and introduced a comprehensive measure that replaced the Korean Motion Picture Promotion Corporation (KMPPC) with the Korean Film Council (KOFIC). The revised Film Promotion law also replaced the Korea Performing Art Promotion Commission with the Korea Media Rating Board. The under-15 rating was deleted and the period of rating postponement was shortened to three months. Appeals could be filed within thirty days. Yet, the revised Law was due for another change with the Constitutional Court's ruling of 30 August 2001. The court said that the Rating Board was still under the control and support of the administration and the postponement system was simply a form of censorship, as it could postpone the rating decision indefinitely. Thus, the rating postponement system was abolished and a restricted screening system was established.

Conclusion

For a long time, the public was deprived of any opportunity to even discuss freedom of expression and films under colonial rule and military governments. Films were reduced to a means for the government's promotion of ideology and preservation of order. Yet, the film-related laws evolved in a legitimate way through the rulings of the Constitutional Court. Currently, the Korean film deliberation system is still in the process of changing, with continued talks on the restricted screening system and the establishment of an independent deliberation organization.

Changes in the Korean Star System

An Jae-seok and Lee Sang-yong

Star power has been evident since the beginnings of Korean film history. Even though it was mostly confined to the local market, stars representing each era appeared in various films and exerted their power. *The Summer I Stole* by Kim Seung-ok, a representative 1960s novelist, has a vivid scene in which a character meets a woman on a train while traveling to his hometown. She loved one male star so much that she started to hang around his house. However, her father had caught her, and now she was on her way home, still treasuring a scarf she received from the star. Just as in this story, star worship is still strong in Korean society.

The Formation of the Star System

The appearance of the first true star in Korean films can be traced back to Lee Wol-hwa of *The Vow Made below the Moon* (Yoon Baek-nam, 1923). However, a “star system” as such did not appear until the late 1950s. It played a critical role in the rapid growth of the Korean film industry. During modernization, women who entered the public arena went to movie theaters, where they could forget about their destitute and difficult lives and recreate themselves by identifying with stars. That is why women audiences envied male stars such as Lee Min, Choi



Magazine advertisement from the late 1950s and featuring Choi Eun-hee as a model



The star couple Shin Seong-il and Um Aing-ran



The Student Couple (Kim Soo-yong, 1964) newspaper advertisement

Moo-ryong and Kim Jin-kyu as well as female stars like Choi Eun-hee, Cho Mi-ryung and Kim Ji-mee. At the time, women's magazines ran stories about stars over many pages. This was an example of the early star system using stars in film marketing and focusing on women, who had emerged as a major consumer group.

However, it was the youth films boom in the mid 1960s that made stars into popular idols. The younger generation then had been born around the time of Korea's liberation from Japanese colonization, and was the first generation to receive American-style education. They made the screen couple of Shin Seong-il and Um Aing-ran their idols and imitated their every move. Shin Seong-il enjoyed huge popularity playing alienated young men, on the basis of which regional distributors pre-sold his films. However, he had to act in several films at the same time, sometimes appearing in as many as twelve films at the same time. In 1967, he appeared in sixty-five films, one third of total number of films produced that year.

The “troika” of three major female stars of the time—Nam Jung-im, Moon Hee, and Yoon Jung-hee—had similar experiences. This period was regarded as the golden age of Korean cinema, and simultaneous appearances in several films became increasingly common for the stars. In an era without management companies, brawny film producers sometimes used violence to secure the cooperation of stars. It is said that simultaneous appearances were also the result of threats from producers rather than greed on the part of the stars themselves. The three main female stars appeared in a staggering total of three hundred films over only seven or eight years, indicating how being a “star” licensed their exploitation.

The Expanded Star System, and the Stars of the Popular Culture Industry

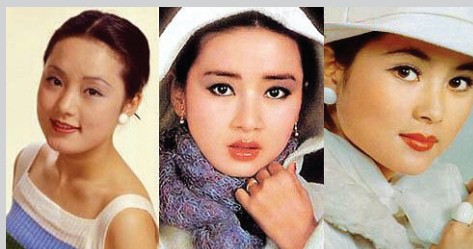
When the three actresses retired in the early 1970s, the film industry faced a serious lack of stars. The development of the popular culture



The "Troika" of the 1960s Female Stars (Moon Hee, Nam Jung-im, and Yoon Jung-hee)



Marriage Classroom (Jeong In-yeob, 1970)



The "New troika" of the 1970s (Jang Mi-hee, Jung Yoon-hee, and Yu Ji-in)

industry, including television, enhanced the status of the star greatly. However, it also meant that stars who had appeared only in films in the 1960s now appeared in other various cultural arenas. Many movie stars moved into television and it was common in the late 1970s for actors to appear in both television dramas and movies. The “new troika”—Yu Ji-in, Jang Mi-hee, and Jung Yoon-hee—were cast in television dramas and movies simultaneously. At the time, by building different star images in television dramas and movies, they provided different pleasures to different audiences, making it was possible to manage stars more effectively than before. Also, stars increasingly appeared in commercials as the commercial industry developed in the 1970s. This meant stars were becoming a high value-added product as media marketing tools. In the 1980s, television commercials boomed with the advent of color television, producing so-called “commercial stars.” Kim Hye-soo, Lee Mi-yeon, Choi Soo-ji, and Ha Hee-ra all started out in commercials, and then appeared in television dramas and movies later to become popular stars of the 1980s. However, because the military government’s appeasement policy led to many erotic films being produced, many female stars avoided movies and turned to television. The number of films produced increased, but the industry suffered from a serious lack of stars. Of course, another actress troika was produced, composed of Won Mi-kyung, Lee Mi-sook, and Lee Bo-hee, and there were “movie actors” like Ahn Sung-ki and Kang Soo-yeon, but their star power was not very powerful. Instead, as foreign film imports increased with liberalization, Hollywood or Hong Kong stars became more popular than Korean stars. Even in television commercials, these foreign stars took the place of Korean stars.

The New Star System and the *Hallyu*

After the boom of “concept movies” in the 1990s, stars were placed at the center of the planning system. Of course, stars no longer guaranteed box-office success, nor did they determine quality. However, cast-

ing star actors was a critical factor when investors decided which films to invest in. Sometimes casting a certain actor determined investment in a particular film.

The star's status began to change once again with the “*hallyu* (Korean wave, 韓流)” phenomenon of the 2000s. Korean stars became popular not only in Korea, but also in Japan, China, Taiwan and South-east Asian countries. This change was evident at the press premiere for *April Snow* (Hur Jin-ho, 2005). Two hundred Japanese reporters attended the premiere, which would have been unimaginable in the past. *Hallyu* stars like Bae Yong-joon exert enormous power in the Japanese market, creating a new phenomenon. Even though the box-office record for *April Snow* in Korea was poor, it had already recouped its budget through sales to the overseas market.

As Korean films were introduced overseas, star status was greater than ever. As a result, star management agencies have become powerful in the entertainment industry. They are carrying out various star marketing campaigns using the stars they have nurtured. Established Korean filmmakers feel threatened by star power and management agencies. Furthermore, the current management system is focused on profits in return for investment, so they just consume star images. Because stars are serving as the bridgehead of Korean films amid the *hallyu*, we have to develop the system and nurture experts to develop long-term and successful star careers. Presently, Korean cinema is undergoing reform.

Korean Women Directors

Nam In-young

Pioneers

It was in 1954, just after the end of the Korean War, that Park Nam-ok decided to make her own movie. At the time, the Korean film production environment was very poor after Japanese occupation, territorial division, and the Korean War. Park started her movie career in the Chosun Film Company after liberation from the Japanese and worked in the Film Crew of the Ministry of National Defense during the Korean War. She made her debut with *The Widow* (1955), a film about the weary lives and desires of war widows. At the time, there was no proper production system, so Park relied on the help of her colleagues to complete this 16mm fiction feature. The first Korean feature by a female director was a box-office flop, but the film was an excellent work about women at the crossroads between tradition and modernity, portraying heroines torn between motherhood and sexual desire. Park did not produce any other movies, but she was revisited in the late 1990s and recognized as a pioneering female filmmaker.

Hong Eun-won joined the film industry during the same period as Park. After working as an assistant director and screenwriter for fifteen years, she debuted as director with *A Woman Judge* in 1962. The film



The Widow (Park Nam-ok, 1955)



A Woman Judge (Hong Eun-won, 1962)
Newspaper advertisement



The Girl Raised as a Future Daughter-in-law
(Choi Eun-hee, 1965)



First Experience (Hwang Hye-mi, 1970)

was based on the death of a female judge, a sensational news event at the time. It shows the heroine as an intellectual woman who tries to juggle her family and her job and portrays the various roles of women who no longer stay at home. Hong also directed *The Single Mom* (1964) and *What Misunderstanding Left Behind* (1966). Choi Eun-hee, who enjoyed great popularity as an actress in the 1960s, also directed period films such as *The Girl Raised as a Future Daughter-in-Law* (1965) and *One-sided Love of Princess* (1967) through Shin Films, her husband Shin Sang-ok's company.

Many movies in the 1970s that deal with women's sexuality interrogate monogyny and women's chastity. *First Experience* (1970), which Hwang Hye-mi wrote and directed, challenged the sexual mores of monogyny. Unlike her predecessors, Hwang is from the generation that received American-style education and their sensitivity was influenced by Western youth culture of the 1950s and 1960s. Hwang joined the film industry as a producer on *Mist* (1967, Kim Soo-yong), based on Kim Seung-ok's *A Road to Mojin*, which is reputed to be the best Korean modernist novel. In *First Experience*, she raised the issue of virginity, which was required of unmarried women. Her theme of modern man's lack of interest in sex and insecurity runs through her movies from *First Experience*, and *When Flowers Sadly Fade away* (1971) to *Relationship* (1972). In the mid 1970s, Han Ok-hee, Kim Jeom-sun, Lee Jeong-hee and Han Soon-ae of the women-only "Khaidu Club" made and presented experimental films.

Korean Cinema Leaps Forward in the 1990s and Women's Participation

There were very few female directors until Korean cinema made a new leap forward in the mid 1990s. Female directors such as Hong Eun-won and Hwang Hye-mi were either dubbed "the only female director" and used in marketing strategies where the rarity of female directors was emphasized, or else treated as supporting staff for male

producers. The latter applies to Lee Mi-rye. Lee was the only female director of theatrically released fictional features throughout the 1980s. She debuted with *My Daughter Rescued from the Swamp* in 1984. Most of the six movies she directed, including *Cabbage in a Pepper Field* (1985) and *Young-shim* (1990), featured teenage girls and boys or college students. Lee wanted to be recognized for her abilities, which meant removing the stigma that her films were the result of her relationship with a network of powerful men.

In the mid 1990s, new ways of nurturing talent started with the changes in the Korean film production system. Women have been particularly active in producing, PR and marketing. New talent has been introduced through short film awards at various film festivals and many specialized film training courses have been provided. It became possible to debut as a feature film director without having first served as an apprentice for a long time in the male-dominated network where deep-rooted gender discrimination existed.

Lim Soon-rye won an award at the Seoul Short Film Festival with *Promenade in the Rain* in 1994 and presented her feature film called *Three Friends* in 1996, launching a new generation of female directors influenced by the Korean New Wave. In 2001, she got rave reviews for directing *Waikiki Brothers*, a film about a band on the road. In *If You Were Me* (2003), an omnibus feature film made as a human rights film project, Lim directed *The 'Weight' of Her*, a short black comedy about the brutal social control of women's appearances. She was also producer on *A Smile* (2003), Park Kyung-hee's debut feature.

As for Jeong Jae-eun, Park Chan-ok and Lee Soo-yeon, their abilities were also recognized at various film festivals when they made short films after studying cinema. Jeong Jae-eun got rave reviews for *Yu-jin's Secret Code* (1999), a short film that portrays the cruel reality of child neglect, and she made her feature debut with *Take Care of My Cat* in 2001. The film portrays four women in a small city outside Seoul who try to fulfill their dreams, and was well received in Korea. In *The Aggressives*

(2005), her focus is also on the younger generation's struggles with reality. Park Chan-ok won attention with her short films, *To Be* (1996) and *Heavy* (1998), and made her feature debut with *Jealousy is My Middle Name* (2002). In this film, she keenly and calmly observed the subtle power relations among men in a way that only the opposite sex can, and won a VPRO Tiger Award at the International Film Festival Rotterdam. Lee Soo-yeon's short films such as *La* (1998) and *The Goggles* (2000) won acclaim, and she made her feature film debut with *The Uninvited* (2003), a horror film about a man traumatized by horrible childhood experiences and a woman who loses her baby because of her friend who is suffering from post-natal depression. Park Kyung-hee wrote the screenplay and worked as an assistant director on *Three Friends*, and was then praised for her short film, *From Midnight to Dawn* (1989). Park portrayed a female photographer who faced the danger of going blind in *A Smile* (2003), creating an image of the thinking woman. Park also directed *Seaside Flower*, a short story about a disabled woman, in *If You Were Me 2* (2005), an omnibus feature film made as a human rights film project. Lee Mi-yeon, who worked as a producer for *The Quiet Family* (Kim Jee-woon, 1998) and *The Foul King* (Kim Jee-woon, 2000), directed *L'Abri* in 2002, which dissected relationships between men and women.

These films were not successful at the box-office, because most of them were art films made and distributed on a low budget. However, Lee Jeong-hyang's films *Art Museum by the Zoo* (1998) and *The Way Home* (2002) were very popular. *Art Museum by the Zoo* is a romantic comedy about a woman and a man who happen to live together and *The Way Home* is a family comedy about a grandson from the city and his rural grandmother. There are other directors who have also taken a more popular approach, such as Lee Seo-gun who wrote the screenplay for *301, 302* (Park Chul-soo, 1995) and debuted with *Rub Love* in 1997, Moh Ji-eun of *A Perfect Match* (2002), and Pang Eun-jin of *Princess Aurora* (2005), featuring a female serial killer.



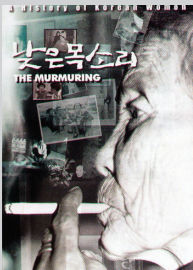
My Daughter Rescued from the Swamp (Lee Mi-rye, 1984)



Three Friends (Lim Soon-rye, 1996)



Art Museum by the Zoo (Lee Jeong-hyang, 1998)



The Murmuring (Byun Young-joo, 1995)
Poster

The Spread of Feminism and Documentary Film

It was also the 1990s when feminist producers and film organizations appeared. The Women's Film Festival in Seoul started in 1997 under the motto of "See the world through women's eyes." Since then, it has been introducing promising female filmmakers. Women in Film Korea was established to improve the status of women film professionals and create a network among them. With a membership of over three hundred, it has engaged in various activities, including publishing on the history and contemporary reality of women film professionals, holding the Women Film Professional's Meeting, giving awards, and raising issues about the treatment of woman film professionals and childcare.

In 1989, "Bariteo," an independent film production group with the purpose of producing feminist films, was established. Byun Young-joo participated and acted as cinematographer on *Even Little Grass Has Its Own Name* (Kim So-young, 1989), a short film about gender discrimination at work, and *My Children* (Doe Sung-hee, 1990), a documentary film about childcare in a poor neighborhood. After directing *Women Being in Asia* in 1993, a documentary about the sex trade in Asia, Byun started producing documentaries about women who had been forced to become sex slaves for Japanese soldiers during the Second World War. *The Murmuring* (1995) was planned from the beginning as a 16mm film for theatrical release. The response was enthusiastic, and the sequels *Habitual Sadness* (1997) and *Habitual Sadness 2 - My Own Breathing* (2000) were produced later. From 2002, Byun started to make feature films. She directed *Ardor* (2002), based on Jeon Kyung-rin's novel, and *Flying Boys* (2004).

Jang Hee-sun made *Making Sun-dried Red Peppers* in 1999, a docudrama on three generations of women. Cho Yoon-Kyung's *Family Project - House of a Father* (2002), Ryu Mi-rye's *Life Goes on* (2003) and Jung Ho-yeon's *Umma* (2005) are also documentary films about the status of women and family issues, incorporating autobiographical elements. Kim Jin-yeol's *Handicapped Woman Kim Jin-ok's Marriage Story* (1999),

Kye un-kyoung's *Pansy & Ivy* (2000) and Lee Young's *Women with Disabilities Empathy* (2002) all feature disabled women talking about their experiences as women. *Parallel* (2000, Lee Hye-ran, Seo Eun-joo), *Rice, Flower, Scapegoat - Film Report by Larnet* (2001, Im In-ae, Seo Eun-joo) and *Always Dream of Tomorrow* (2001, Kim Mi-re) are about gender discrimination in male-dominated workplaces and female workers struggles against it.

The *White Paper on Women Film Professionals*, published by Women in Film Korea in 2001, introduced 146 feature and short films directed by women, and almost 160 Korean films were submitted to the short film competition of the Women's Film Festival in Seoul in 2006. The number of women film professionals and films on women has increased dramatically in the 2000s. However, systematic and conventional constraints against women still exist, and removing these constraints and establishing the status of women as equal and free human beings is still in process.

The Representation of the Family in Korean Cinema

Joo You-shin

In Korean society, the family system and the ideology of familism have a dominant influence over the social structure and policy, as well as individual psychology and daily life. This is because, in Korean society where Confucian patriarchy has been traditionally dominant, the individual ego is the “familial ego” and one’s identity is determined strictly within the family and family relationships. Furthermore, the rapid modernization that marks Korea’s modern history was possible because families reproduced and provided a steady supply of labor for society. Therefore, families functioned as the main conduit for national and social control and suppression.

Furthermore, in social crises, family values were strengthened and emphasized, making the ideological struggle over the representation of the family in movies fiercer. On the other hand, Korea’s tragic modern history, marked by the Japanese occupation, the Korean War, territorial division, and a fascist political system made family values and the family’s control over individuals unstable and incomplete.

Women's Melodrama in the 1950s and Men's Melodrama in the 1960s

The Korean War might be considered the defining event for Korean society during the last century. Lasting over three years, the war not only caused tremendous physical damage but also inflicted deep psychological wounds on society and the people. The war also brought about dramatic changes in gender relationships and gender roles. Women increasingly participated in social activities because there were no family heads or men were incapacitated due to the war. As a result, women no longer had to play the traditional gender role of undertaking household chores and childcare and became a driving force for sexual desire and consumerism, inviting both social attention and criticism.

Therefore, women's melodramas, which accounted for more than half of all the movies made in the 1950s, vividly portrayed social trends, relationships between men and women, and family relationships from a new ethical perspective. Movies like *Madame Freedom* (Han Hyung-mo, 1956) and *The Flower in Hell* (Shin Sang-ok, 1958) beautifully portrayed female icons known as “liberal wives” and “prostitutes for the Yankees” who also found themselves caught up with desire and fighting traditional values. At the same time, these movies hurried to reestablish the taboos and limits the women had broken through.

However, the 1950s era of compromised national authority faded with the unsuccessful April 19 Revolution in 1960. The 1960s started with the May 16 Military Coup in 1961. As a result, Korean society faced modernization forced from the top in the pursuit of absolute power and uniform social integration. Against this backdrop, a lot of men's melodramas were made in the early 1960s, with a new start for single families led by male patriarchs struggling to overcome crisis. These were clearly also national allegories.

Family melodramas like *A Romantic Papa* (Shin Sang-ok, 1960), *Uncle Park* (Kang Dae-jin, 1960), *A Coachman* (Kang Dae-jin, 1961), and *A*

Petty Middle Manager (Lee Bong-rae, 1961) starred Kim Seung-ho, a Korean everyman. The narratives were about impotent patriarchs who could not keep up with modernization, causing family crisis, and the competent men from the next generation like sons, sons-in-law, and other family members, who worked together to overcome the crisis. These stories dealt with individual conflicts over liberalism and democratic values, which appeared in the early modernization process, and the arrival of a new generation that pioneered modernization, as well as the family values that still played an important role during the process. These stories also clearly signaled that modernization would continue to be carried out on the basis of male principles and solidarity.

Regression and Stagnation in the 1970s and “New Korean Cinema” in the late 1980s

In a nutshell, Korean movies in the 1970s experienced regression and stagnation. Filmmakers felt powerless as audiences turned away from Korean movies in the face of social oppression and harsh censorship. Unable to voice public opinion or raise consciousness about history, movies focused on bar hostesses, portraying dissolute women’s sexuality and bodies from a standpoint that combined voyeurism with the tragic tone. In these movies, the women are dissolute because they are separated from their traditional roots in their families. But, at the same time, the women are also held responsible for not being able to control themselves.

Most popular movies like *Heavenly Homecoming to Stars* (Lee Jang-ho, 1974), *Yeong-ja’s Heyday* (Kim Ho-sun, 1975), and *Winter Woman* (Kim Ho-sun, 1977), portrayed the lives of alienated lower class women, patriarchal control and exploitation of women’s sexuality, and the sensitivity of youth culture. They displayed the popular sentiments and imaginative power of movies in the 1970s. On the other hand, there were also movies that portrayed impotent men, scarred and castrated in the course of modernization, and families that didn’t serve any more



The Flower in Hell (Shin Sang-ok, 1958)



A Coachman (Kang Dae-jin, 1961)



The Pollen of Flowers (Ha Kilchong, 1972)

as sites of purification and rest. While the morally collapsed bourgeois family in *The Pollen of Flowers* (Ha Kilchong, 1972) represents “devilish modernity,” *A Road to Sampo* (Lee Man-hee, 1975) metaphorically expresses the fates of people who have lost the sanctuary of home through the journey of two men and one woman.

The “Korean New Wave” that heralded a new era of Korean movies in the early 1980s attempted pointed social criticism and alternative historiography with a new cinema style and sensitivity. However, women were still portrayed as helpless victims. Heroines like Young-hee in *Berlin Report* (Park Kwang-su, 1991), Song-hwa in *Sopyonje* (Im Kwon-taek, 1993) and the young girl in *A Petal* (Jang Sun-woo, 1995) are victims of violence committed in the name of the nation, the people, and the individual. They are without the benefit of any protection from their families and are allegories of an impotent people and nation. Un-rye in *The Silver Stallion Will Never Come* (Jang Gil-soo, 1991) and Chang-hee’s mother in *Spring in My Hometown* (Lee Kwang-mo, 1998) are female symbols of a people physically and spiritually impaired and insulted by foreign powers, represented by the USA.

The Second Renaissance of Korean Cinema after the late 1990s

The 1997 economic crisis accelerated reform through neo-liberal ideology. In this process, the Korean middle class collapsed and the gap between the rich and the poor widened. On the other hand, this harsh and destructive economic crisis that swept through society also led to the idealization of the private, particularly the family, and made all human values focus on the family. As a result, Korean movies after the 1990s showed rapidly disintegrating families and breaking down of all the ideologies that maintained the family and the family system. They were also ironic in their portrayal of desperate attempts by men to re-establish both the form and the value of the family.

Movies like *An Affair* (E J-yong, 1998), *Marriage is a Crazy Thing*



Spring in My Hometown (Lee Kwang-mo, 1998)



Marriage is a Crazy Thing (Yoo Ha, 2002)



Ode to My Family (Lee Jung-chul, 2004)

(Yoo Ha, 2002) and *A Good Lawyer's Wife* (Im Sang-soo, 2003) focus on women's desire and sexuality. They portray heroines questioning, challenging, and experimenting with marriage and the family system. On the other hand, men's melodramas like *The Letter* (Lee Junggook, 1997) and family melodramas like *Ode to My Family* (Lee Jungchul, 2004), *The President's Barber* (Lim Charnsang, 2004), and *Crying Fist* (Ryoo Seung-wan, 2005) are tragic stories of men who overcome catastrophic crises of their families with their pure love, sacrifice, or masculinity.

Images of Women in Korean movies

Gina Yu

Women have always been part of the Korean cinema. However, for the most part, they were marginalized. Woman characters in black and white silent films made during the Japanese occupation were played by men, who were as pretty as women. As in Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* (1993) or John Madden's *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), women could not appear on screen or stage because of gender discrimination. Then, after Lee Wol-hwa debuted as the first actress playing a woman's role in *The Vow Made below the Moon* (1923, Yoon Baek-nam), it became possible for women to appear on screen. Of course, it was possible only on the condition that women would play fictional images.

The Divided Image of Women in Their Cruel History

There are two major images of women in Korean movies, mainly found in the melodrama and horror genres. One is the "good wife and wise mother" who conforms to traditional Confucianism and is locked into the ideology of chastity. The other is the wicked woman who is either a femme fatale or a seductress.

With the first kind of image, women were victims or the embodiment of endurance in the cruel history of women. As many movies of this type were screened at international film festivals in the 1980s, the im-



Spinning the Tales of Cruelty towards Women (Lee Doo-yong, 1983)



Hanging Tree (Jung Jin-woo, 1984)



A Good Lawyer's Wife (Im Sang-soo, 2003)

age of tragic and fettered women was thought to be characteristic of Korean cinema. As the title *Spinning the Tales of Cruelty towards Women* (Lee Doo-yong, 1983) indicates, this movie portrayed the folk history of merciless treatment of women in the rigidly patriarchal structures of the Chosun era before Japan colonized Korea. Similarly, women's mission to give birth to a son and their tragic fate of being an object to comfort men are illustrated in *Hanging Tree* (Jung Jin-woo, 1984) and *The Surrogate Woman* (Im Kwon-taek, 1986). The tragic lives of women sacrificed due to cruel gender discrimination in the Chosun era are typical of period films.

Chaste women who are "good wives and wise mothers" are portrayed very lyrically in *Mother and a Guest* (1961, Shin Sang-ok) with Choi Eun-hee's elegant acting. A direct descendent is *Love Me Once Again* (Jung So-young, 1968), dubbed the original Korean melodrama and the greatest hit of its time. In this movie, chaste love only on the part of women justifies men's flirtation with other women, and the unmarried mother faces all the challenges stemming from such relationships.

On the opposite side of from the "good wife and wise mother" who serves as the chaste servant of the family are women in movies like *Madame Freedom* (Han Hyung-mo, 1956) who want to liberate themselves. *Madame Freedom* is about the wife of a professor who indulges in dancing, which was all the rage with the arrival of the American-style liberal view on women. Its success made it the prototype for movies like *The Aema Woman* (Jeong In-yeob, 1982). *The Aema Woman* had three sequels and created the erotic film boom of the 1980s. She became the symbol of another image: married upper class women who seek financial independence and escape from their loveless marriages to authoritarian but sexually impotent husbands, as well as the responsibilities of motherhood. However, like Ibsen's Nora, these women are punished in the end.

Nevertheless, after the 1980s, the issue of women who flee marriage and home is portrayed more realistically in melodramas. *A Pillar of*

Mist (Park Chul-soo, 1986), *A Woman on the Verge* (Chung Ji-young, 1987), *Only Because You are a Woman* (Kim Yu-jin, 1990), *An Affair* (E J-yong, 1998), *Ardor* (Byun Young-joo, 2002), *A Good Lawyer's Wife* (Im Sang-soo, 2003) and *Green Chair* (Park Chul-soo, 2004) overturn the traditional image of women stuck in marriage and at home, breaking down the practice of portraying women from a patriarchal ethical perspective. In other words, the birth of the Korean Nora only happened after the 1980s.

At the same time, extremely strong and evil women were the theme of director Kim Ki-young (*The Housemaid*, *The Insect Woman*, *The Woman of Fire '82*, and *Carnivorous Animal*). This type, like the female lead in *The Housemaid* who sexually exploits men, seducing them and destroying their orderly families, is obviously the inverse of the typical image.

The Spectacle of the Woman's Body as an Object of Sexual Love

During the era when the military government's censorship was harsh, women often took the lead in so-called "hostess films." Rapid industrialization and the subsequent growth of the urban entertainment industry led many lower class women into factory labor and prostitution. As film censorship was strengthened while the entertainment industry grew, hostess films such as *Heavenly Homecoming to Stars* (Lee Jang-ho, 1974), *Yeong-ja's Heyday* (Kim Ho-sun, 1975), *Winter Woman* (Kim Ho-sun, 1977), and *Miss O's Apartment* (Byun Jang-ho, 1978) followed. These movies portray innocent rural women who come to Seoul to make money, do menial jobs, and finally become prostitutes or voluntarily become the voyeuristic objects of men's desire. After the hostess genre, more realistic images of prostitutes appeared in 1980s movies, when more freedom of expression was allowed. In *Ticket* (Im Kwon-taek, 1986), *Prostitution* (You Jin-sun, 1988) and *Downfall* (Im Kwon-taek, 1997), prostitution was portrayed as the dark side of rapid modernization, and the depiction of the lives of women who fell into

prostitution was portrayed from a humanistic perspective. However, these films failed to depict the women's own ideas and reflections on prostitution.

In the 1990s, serious films were about the real issues facing women living in Korean society. *Only Because You are a Woman*, which is based on a true story, is about sexual discrimination against women. In the movie, a victim of sexual assault is victimized again in the patriarchal court. *Blue in You* (Lee Hyeon-seung, 1992) is similar to *A Pillar of Mist*. It deals with the superwoman syndrome, which dictates that women with professional jobs cannot have both work and marriage in Korean society. *A Hot Roof* (Lee Min-yong, 1995), a story about a beaten wife and solidarity among women, is a social satire describing the oppression of women.

The Changing Image of Women

A romantic comedy, *Marriage Story* (Kim Eui-suk, 1992), opened the era of concept movies in the 1990s. This was also a time when women were increasingly entering the public sphere, and the film depicted a female character whose career is equal to that of men. Romantic comedies contributed to transforming the tragic image of women into cheerful, confident, and proactive characters who have their own jobs. Female characters with different jobs appeared, such as the lyric writer in *Doctor Bong* (Lee Kwang-hoon, 1995), the office worker in *The Man with Breasts* (Shin Seung-soo, 1993), and the film producer in *How to Top My Wife* (Kang Woo-Suk, 1994). However, the fact that all women with professional jobs ultimately focus on marriage in these films shows the limitations of the genre and character type. Among them, *Art Museum by the Zoo* (Lee Jeong-hyang, 1998) is most remarkable in terms of a realistic depiction of a female character and perspective.

Movies on female characters who live more independent lives and the specific realities of women's lives appear from the late 1990s. *Girls' Night Out* (Im Sang-soo) and *An Affair* (E J-yong) in 1998 dealt with



Downfall (Im Kwon-taek, 1997)



Blue in You (Lee Hyeon-seung, 1992)



Mayonnaise (Yun In-ho, 1999)

women's sexuality free from the obsession about chastity. In *Ardor* and *A Good Lawyer's Wife*, there is no longer an obsession with the idea that women who have left their families should be punished and returned. Instead, these movies portray female characters with independent lives. *Happy End* (Jung Ji-woo, 1999) portrays a married woman with a professional job and financial power, showing changes in Korean society and the possibility of changes in gender roles.

After *Mayonnaise* (Yun In-ho, 1999), which breaks down the traditional motherhood myth of endurance and sacrifice, movies appeared that raised issues about motherhood mythology and established women's image as strong subjects in horror movies. Vibrant and popular horror movies like the *Whispering Corridors* series (1998~2005) uphold the horror image of women but also portray teenagers' lives realistically. *A Tale of Two Sisters* (Kim Jee-woon, 2003) and *The Uninvited* (Lee Sooyeon, 2003) also represent complex and realistic women.

The Korean movie renaissance that started from the late 1990s places a strong emphasis on brotherly love. In Korean blockbuster movies like *Swiri* (Kang Je-kyu, 1999), *Joint Security Area / JSA* (Park Chan-wook, 2000), *Friend* (Kwak Kyung-taek, 2001), *Silmido* (Kang Woo-suk, 2003), *Tae-guk-gi* (Kang Je-Kyu, 2004), women play only minor roles. In art movies by directors who represent Korean cinema in international film festivals like Hong Sangsoo's *Virgin Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors* (2000), *Woman is the Future of Man* (2004), and *A Tale of Cinema* (2005), or Kim Ki-duk's *Bad Guy* (2002) and *3-Iron* (2004), women are also weak or victims, showing women simply as objects of fantasy and exposing the desires of the men behind the camera and the story in these movies. Perhaps women's traditional roles as victims of the patriarchal order and comfort objects for men are too powerful to fully accommodate women as strong subjects.

In today's golden era of Korean cinema, female characters and their lives are still on the periphery in terms of both quantity and quality. In that regard, realistic depiction of women's lives in Korean movies de-

pend upon constructing images more grounded in the specificity of women's existence.

National Cinema-Who Is It For?

The History and Context of the Korean Cinema

Sunah Kim

Liberation from Japanese colonial rule, the Korean War, and national division are the three monumental events in the history of Korean cinema. The traces of historical events control the direction of history itself, determine the appearance and disappearance of a genre, and define the relations and boundaries between film and politics. The interrelated events of liberation, the Korean War, and national division aroused anti-Japanese and pro-American sentiment, while increasing the feeling of being a victim of history. Liberty, anti-communism, patriotism and democracy were treated as one thing, and this belief was used by those in power. This is the context of the Korean cinema audience. This belief was abused as a national ideology to buttress hegemony by administrations, including those empowered by military coup, military dictatorships, and the so-called civilian governments. Korean cinema developed against this political background.

Anti-communism, Reunification, and Victimhood in Nationalist Cinema

In films, the Korean people are portrayed as the victims of history, and



Piagol (Lee Kang-chun, 1955) Publicity still



The Hand of Destiny (Han Hyung-mo, 1954)
Poster



The Seven Female POW's (Lee Man-hee, 1965)



The North and South (Kim Kee-duk, 1965)

this is related to nationalistic ideology such as anti-communism. Because of this background, the history of the Korean cinema must be understood through careful observation of the cinematic discourses that provoked ideological dispute and the themes of the films. The most frequent theme was North Korea (and its military). North Korean ideology and the military shaped by that ideology have appeared frequently since Korea's liberation in all film genres. Therefore, studying how these depictions have changed enables us to understand changing political ideas in the cinema. *Piagol* (Lee Kang-chun, 1955), in which all the characters are North Korean soldiers, and *The Hand of Destiny* (Han Hyung-mo, 1954), which features a love story between a North Korean spy and a South Korean soldier, were produced before the Park Cheong-hee (a.k.a. Park Chung-hee) regime's political promotion of anti-communist ideology by awards for producing "quality" films. The North Korean theme continued in war films of the 1960s; anti-communist and national policy films in the 1970s; *North Korean Partisan in South Korea* (Chung Ji-young, 1990), which came out after the democratization movement of June 1987; *Swiri* (Kang Je-kyu, 1999); and many more films, particularly comedies, after the 2000 summit meeting between the two Koreas.

Piagol's release was blocked at first because it was accused of being pro-communist. It featured a North Korean troop that failed to retreat to North Korea after the Korean War, but did not deliver the message that South Korea was superior to North Korea and that the North Korean soldiers regretted fighting for communism. The film passed censorship by adding a scene with the South Korean national flag, suggesting the survivors' defection. Such strong anti-communism is also seen with *An Aimless Bullet* (Yu Hyun-mok, 1961). When the mother cries out "Let's go!" in the film, some interpreted the line as meaning, "Let's go to North Korea," as a result of which the film was banned. In the 1960s, the Third Republic—the first period of the Park Cheong-hee regime that had overthrown the previous government by a military



North Korean Partisan in South Korea (Chung Ji-young, 1990)



Swiri (Kang Je-kyu, 1999)



To the Starry Island (Park Kwang-su, 1993)



A Peppermint Candy (Lee Chang-dong, 1999)

coup in May 1961—strengthened anti-communist ideology. The anti-communist genre was established and the government censored every film strictly. Lee Man-hee's *The Seven Female POW's* (1965) had to change its title to *Return of the Female Soldiers*, because the government claimed that the original title demeaned the Korean military. The director even had to endure torture. From the mid 1960s until the 1980s, Korean films were strictly controlled by military dictatorships. As any humanitarian perspective on the North Koreans was considered pro-communist, Korean films became monotonous and routine, and the Korean audience turned away from Korean cinema. However, the filmmakers took a detour around ideological confrontation through mixed genres such as war-action films and war-melodramas. Instead of featuring anti-war and humanitarian themes, which were considered pro-communist, Korean films emphasized the Korean people as victims. *The North and South* (Kim Kee-duk, 1965), *I Want to Be Human* (Yu Hyun-mok, 1969), *Rainy Days* (Yu Hyun-mok, 1979), *No Glory* (Im Kwon-taek, 1979), *Mismatched Nose* (Im Kwon-taek, 1980), and *Kilsodeum* (Im Kwon-taek, 1985) are some examples.

North Korean Partisan in South Korea looks at North Korea and its soldiers left behind in South Korea as victims of history, rather than looking at the Korean War as a byproduct of the Cold War. Comedy films about North Korea increased dramatically after the historical summit between the two Koreas in 2000. They tried to resolve ideological confrontation through laughter. Most showed the economic superiority of South Korea and the isolation of North Korea in capitalist globalization. *Swiri* came out in this social atmosphere of reconciliation in the 1990s. It was similar to *The Hand of Destiny* in so far as it features a female spy from the North and focuses on her internal struggles between romance and ideology. However, whereas Margaret in *The Hand of Destiny* is financially better off than the South Korean soldier who disguises himself as a laborer, Lee Bang-hee, the spy in *Swiri*, is inferior to the man, suggesting the same old belief that North Korea is in-

ferior. Some individual films have been out of tune with the prevailing ideology, lagging behind as the nation went from anti-communism to reconciliation. An example is *Tae-guk-gi* (2004, Kang Je-kyu), which attempts to heal national wounds and emphasizes the importance of family. Despite the prevalent anti-war sentiment and reconciliation mood, the film still defends conservative values. Through the history of liberation, the Korean War, and national division, constructive criticism of nationalism and gender discrimination is lost in the film. So we can find a political standpoint only in the different attitudes around male-oriented nationalism.

Beyond the National Wound

A particular period of Korean history became another controversial political area for the Korean cinema. After the late 1980s, when government censorship and anti-communist restrictions were relaxed, a number of revisionist films that shed new light on post-liberation history appeared, escaping strict government control. This revisionist genre was quite different from the various popular genres that had developed spontaneously in the 1960s and the 1970s and the government-controlled genres such as enlightenment, anti-communist and national policy films. The so-called “Korean New Wave” vividly depicted Korean reality from the people’s perspective, using film as an archive for public memory and restoring the history that had been distorted by government-led ideology and equated liberty, anti-communism, and patriotism with democracy. It gave protestors against government control support and focused on humanism and nationalism. Exemplary Korean New Wave films include *Chil-su and Man-su* (Park Kwang-su, 1988), *The Age of Success* (Jang Sun-woo, 1988), *A Short Love Affair* (Jang Sun-woo, 1990), *Black Republic* (Park Kwang-su, 1990), *Berlin Report* (Park Kwang-su, 1991), *To the Starry Island* (Park Kwang-su, 1993), *Out to the World* (Yeo Kyun-dong, 1994), *A Single Spark* (Park Kwang-su, 1995), *A Petal* (Jang Sun-woo, 1996), and *Pep-*

permint Candy (Lee Chang-dong, 1999). All the directors of these films were influenced by the nationalist movement and the class movement of the 1980s. The films attempt to capture Korean history, accentuating the reality of ordinary life with an ideology that stands against government-controlled ideology. Despite the commercialization of the cinema because of skyrocketing production costs, such films make room for political and ideological cinema.

In conclusion, the political perspective of Korean films can be best understood by observing the relationship between the North and the South in films, and their perspective on the Korean present and past. This shows that the division of the nation and the related problems of the people were the center of political representation. However, with the end of military dictatorship, the political influences on films have changed with the emergence of a different style of realism, the other gender as a workforce, and a point of view that deviates from nationalist history. Now, the political arena in cinema itself needs to be redefined.

A History of Korean Film Policies

Kim Hyae-joon

Film policies can be divided into three models – the control model, the promotion model and the laissez faire model. Korean film policies adopted the control model until the late 1980s. During Kim Youngsam’s presidency, when the United States pressured for market opening, the control model and the laissez faire model coexisted. The promotion model was adopted with the start of the Kim Dae-jung government on 25 February 1998.

From Control to Promotion

The scope of film policies could be considerably expanded if indirect factors are taken into account. Territorial division, cold war in East Asia, Korea’s special relationship with the U.S. and Japan, economic factors in the film industry, and more affected Korean movies more than film policies. The Japanese occupation and US military government after the Second World War combined with territorial division to create film censorship that lasted until 2001. Japan’s pop culture, import of which was prohibited due to memories of the Japanese occupation of Korea, was allowed to enter Korea only after the “Korea-Japan Joint Partnership Declaration” of 7 October 1998. The Korean military government seized power in an undemocratic way and was

sponsored by the US government. Therefore, the US government was able to increase its influence over Korean films.

It is fair to say that obtaining “freedom of expression” through the abolition of censorship has made today’s film industry competitive. That is why the Kim Dae-jung government’s abolition of censorship has been the most positively received film policy ever. Korean movies are appealing to Korean audiences, because Korean movies can deal with the various experiences of the Korean people and spark social debate. It is practically impossible to boost the competitiveness of films only with financial support when creativity is lacking, and creativity is mainly driven by “freedom of expression.” The Kim Dae-jung government’s slogan for cultural policies was “provide support, but do not interfere.” Accordingly, controls such as film censorship disappeared and support for investment, production and distribution increased markedly. President Kim pledged that he would abolish censorship during his campaign in 1997, and censorship was abolished in January 2001. President Kim was able to keep his pledge only after four years, because the opposition party insisted on controls over films and delayed reform. Without the Constitutional Court’s decision of August 2001 that film censorship infringes freedom of expression as stated in the constitution of the Republic of Korea, abolition of censorship might have been delayed even further. In October 1996, the Constitutional Court found that it is unconstitutional that a review committee, to whom the government delegates its authority, can cut parts of movies. However, the ruling party at the time had pursued the control model consistently throughout the Park Cheong-hee (a.k.a. Park Chung-hee), Jeon Doo-hwan (a.k.a. Chun Doo-hwan), Roh Tae-woo, and Kim Young-sam administrations, and so they ignored the judgment. Some people from within the film industry agreed. Only when the same judgment was made by the Constitutional Court during the following administration did they have to accept the constitutional amendment.

The Era of Control and Censorship

The “Motion Picture Law” was enacted in January 1962 and revised nine times, until it became the “Film Promotion Law” in July 1996. This process is linked to control over the film industry and censorship. After the end of the Second World War, the United States did not know much about the Korean situation. So, ironically, the U.S. had to get information about Korea from the Japanese military government. The information provided by Japan was that the Korean people were incompetent and public security would be seriously undermined without control by the Japanese military government. As a result, the US military government produced a film censorship system and the Rhee Syngman (a.k.a. Lee Seung-man) government inherited it. But the Rhee Syngman regime was defeated by the April 19 Revolution in 1960 and the democratic government was established. The “Film Ethics Provisions” announced by the democratic government spoke of “creating ideology in line with the spirit of democracy, respecting people’s rights, and denying ideology that gave priority to bureaucracy.” However, this more democratic mood only lasted from 19 April 1960 to 16 May 1961, due to the military coup. The Park Cheong-hee government that seized power through a military coup in 1961 demanded that media, publication, and news all undergo censorship. It enacted the Motion Picture Law and merged seventy-one film companies into only sixteen. Film production companies were allowed to produce films only if they had a studio, sound recording and developing facilities, and equipment including cameras, as well as full-time directors and actors and technicians. This measure followed in the footsteps of the Japanese military government’s Motion Picture Law of 1939, which attempted to “merge existing film companies and proactively guide and review film planning.” The revised Constitution of 1963 even had an article saying, “censorship of films and entertainment to defend public morals and social ethics is permissible,” which completely ignored the commonly accepted idea in democratic societies that film is part of the media, and

there can be no censorship of it. From that time on, filmmaking was censored in a three step process before, during and after the shoot.

According to first revision of the Motion Picture Law in 1963, a film company should make fifteen films a year to be recognized as a film company, and only then was it allowed to import foreign movies. Due to this harsh system, seventeen film companies had their licenses cancelled in June 1963. This unrealistic target was revised to two films in 1966, five in 1970, and four in 1973, before disappearing altogether in 1984. Meanwhile, those who could not establish film companies had to pay commissions to other registered film companies to produce movies.

When the Motion Picture Law was enacted in 1962, the government's promotion films, known as "cultural films," had to be screened before the main feature, a practice that persisted until June 1998. The history of the Grand Bell Awards illustrates the government's intervention in Korean cinema. The anti-communist film award, the security section award and the enlightenment section award were inaugurated in 1962. When the anti-communist films or films promoting government policy won the Grand Bell best film awards, the film companies received the right to import foreign movies as a reward. Film production companies lobbied strongly to obtain the right to import foreign movies, which guaranteed enormous profits. Only about thirty foreign movies were imported a year, until the import quota system was abolished with the fifth revision of the Motion Picture Law. Therefore, by importing foreign movies, one could make huge profits. And with this profit, film companies had to produce movies to meet mandatory requirements and receive further rights to import foreign movies. Against this backdrop, Korean movies could not become competitive.

The Enactment of the Film Promotion Law and the Launch of the Korean Film Council

The screen quota system was introduced in the second revision of the Motion Picture Law (1966). At first, the number of mandatory screening days reserved for Korean films was more than ninety days a year, but it increased to 121 days with the fourth revision (1973) and to 146 in 1984. However, this was meaningless when there was control on the import of foreign movies. The screen quota system became effective when the sixth revision allowed direct distribution of Hollywood movies, unlimited imports of foreign movies, and unlimited numbers of prints of foreign movies from 1994. Until 1993, only sixteen prints of one film could be screened, which effectively limited the number of screens an imported film could be released on. With deregulation, the “wide release” commonly adopted for Hollywood blockbusters was introduced to Korea.

From 1986, along with people’s rising demand for democratization, film professionals consistently demanded the abolition of censorship and the development of measures to promote Korean movies, in preparation for the expansion of Hollywood movies in Korea. The Film Promotion Law was enacted in December 1995, but it was no different from the Motion Picture Law until the second revision of the Film Promotion Law in 1999, which launched the Korean Film Council (KOFIC) with the aim of respecting the freedom of the film industry and making promotion policies effective.

Trends in the Structure of the Korean Film Industry

Kim Mee hyun

The Korean film industry has long been under the influence of society, politics, policies and regulations. Such influence has weighed down the cinema of a peripheral nation with little sense of self-awareness. Korean film history, which began with some short foreign films, has been disrupted by many tragic events such as colonization and war.

With a structural approach, the post-war Korean film industry can be divided into two main periods. From late 1950s to the early 1990s, the film industry was barely sustained by the producers of Chungmuro and regional distributors, who had divided the country up into six major regions. From the mid 1980s, filmmaking was liberalized and direct distribution from Hollywood began. With nationwide domestic distribution in the mid 1990s, an integrated investment, filmmaking, distribution, and exhibition structure was established. This was a new beginning for Korean cinema, and helped to give it an international brand name.

The Liberalization of Film Producing and Imports, and the Open Market

The post-war film market in the 1950s was virtually open and the film industry was just starting to bud by the late 1950s. However, the Motion Picture Law of 1962 made the Korean film market a closed structure, as the seventy-one film companies went through consolidation. The number of registered companies allowed to produce and import films dropped as low as six but never exceeded twenty-six. Government policies controlled filmmaking and the number of imports. Creative filmmaking was suppressed in the name of nurturing major companies. As only a few producers were allowed to make films and to import foreign films, those who could not register as producers had to borrow the names of other companies to make films and rights to import foreign films were selling for exorbitant prices. This distorted industry structure persisted for over twenty years until 1984.

The fifth and sixth revisions of the Motion Picture Law in the mid 1980s served as a turning point for the film industry, moving it towards open competition. Producing and imports were separated and liberalized, and foreign films could be distributed directly. Thanks to the fifth revision in 1986, the number of film companies increased sharply from twenty to twenty-nine in 1985, and sixty-one in 1986. Young directors took over and the new generation created a totally new mode of filmmaking. The change, however, was not the result of the government effort to nurture the Korean cinema, but of preparation work by the US to open the Korean market.

The two rounds of Korea-US talks on cinema (in 1985 and 1988) laid the foundations for Hollywood distributors to operate freely in Korea. The terms included ① permission to establish a local office for US film companies in Korea, ② the imminent lifting of the screen quota (although this was not accepted in the end) and an upper limit on prices for imported films, ③ holding talks on tariffs with the US during 1986, ④ the repeal of the system that required companies to have

government endorsement before they exported or imported films, and the repeal of the system for censoring foreign films on 1 January 1989, and ⑤ a phased abolition of restrictions on the number of prints of imported films, increasing per year from twelve in 1989 until complete annulment in 1994. Therefore, five major direct distributors including UIP (United International Pictures, 1988), 20th CenturyFox (1988), Warner Brothers (1989), Columbia Tristar (1990) and Buena Vista (1993) established their regional offices in Korea. In 1988, Adrian Lyne's *Fatal Attraction* (1987) was screened in eight theaters against strong resistance from the Korean cinema world. The big success of Jerry Zucker's *Ghost* (distributed by UIP) marked the established presence of US direct distributors in 1990.

The Korean share of the film box-office had reached 30 per cent in the 1980s, but it plummeted to 15.9 per cent in 1993. The number of films made per year also plunged from between one hundred and one hundred and twenty in the late 1980s to sixty-three in 1993 to forty-three in 1998. On the other hand, the number of imported films soared from twenty-five in 1984 under the imported film quota system to 264 in 1989, 347 in 1993, and 405 in 1996.

Distribution System in the Rural Areas

Even during this time of fundamental change, the structure of investment and distribution that was established in the 1960s persisted until the early 1990s. Outside Chungmuro, the country was divided into six major areas. Regional distributors purchased rights by paying producers at the screenplay writing stage. Regional distributors played the role of film investors with this pre-sale system. Why was the regional distribution system set up? First, direct distribution was not effective due to underdeveloped transportation at the time. Second, due to the small scale of the film industry, producers could not assume the whole risk of making films, and so they sought out partners to share the risk with. Third, as the regional distributors were also theater owners, they pur-

chased the right to screen before the completion of the film to ensure hit movies for their own theaters. This system means that production was funded by individual regional distributors, a system that was rational at the time. It continued for forty years until UIP started nationwide direct distribution in 1999. At first, the US distributors could not do business directly because of the high entry barriers and restrictions on the number of prints of imported films. They had to go through the so-called “Chungmuro distribution network.” Therefore, the Korean film industry changed fundamentally only after the emergence of direct distribution made funding and nationwide exhibition easier.

Large Conglomerates Enter the Film Industry and Vertical Integration Follows.

The second period of the Korean film industry started with the liberalization of production and the opening of the film market in 1995, when domestic distributors including Cinema Service, Ilshin Investment Capital, and Samsung Entertainment Group began nationwide distribution. This is the time when large conglomerates (or *chaebols*) started entering the film industry. When *Marriage Story* (Kim Eui-suk) was a big hit in 1992 and Samsung purchased the video copyright, Daewoo, Byucksan, Haitai, Hanbo, SCK, Saehan and Jinro entered the film market. In the 1990s, as the video market expanded rapidly, large home appliance makers such as Samsung, LG and Daewoo turned their eyes to the software market to increase their hardware sales. Their purchase of video rights brought funds from outside to Chungmuro. *Chaebols* invested in Korean films and expanded their influence in filmmaking, distribution, and exhibition. They laid the foundation for the vertical integration of investment, producing, distribution, and exhibition. However, the financial crisis that really hit home in 1999 and failures of big budget films led to the retreat of the *chaebols* from the film industry.

Almost simultaneously, finance capital entered the film industry and

the *chaebols* made a second entry. These forces are still playing a determining role in the market today. The *chaebols*' first entry was made by purchasing video rights and investing in filmmaking, whereas the second entry hedged investment risks by starting backwards. Based on their multiplex chains, CJ Entertainment, Tongyang and Lotte made moves away from investment in films and distribution. The first multiplex cinema, CJ's Gangbyeon-CGV opened with eleven screens in 1998, followed by Tongyang's Megabox and Lotte's Lotte Cinema. Cinema Service started as an independent filmmaking company, but then they also distributed films and opened a multiplex cinema called Primus Cinema. The multiplex cinemas and the lifting of the limits on print numbers in 1994 changed the distribution and exhibition culture dramatically. Until the 1990s, a single title would show on only twenty screens across the country. However, today the wide release pattern has been generalized and a blockbuster film is screened simultaneously in one third of all the movie theaters in the country. The total number of screens tripled from 507 in 1997 to 1648 in 2005. Currently, comfortable and convenient cinemas are attracting many moviegoers in the neighborhoods. CJ Entertainment, Orion Corporation (a spin-off company from Tongyang), and Lotte are strengthening the vertical integration system that connects investment, distribution, and exhibition. Some raise concerns that they may distort the free-booking market and make their own blocs.

Another 1998 trend was the entry of finance capital. This unusual phenomenon began with the government's support for venture investment in 1999. The film industry emerged as a promising industry with a short investment-to-yield period and relatively low risks for investment capital. The first film funded in this way was Ilshin Investment's *The Ginkgo Bed* (Kang Je-kyu, 1995). However, full-fledged investment began in 1998 when Mirae Audiovisual Venture 1 founded the first audio-visual investment fund. The fund raised capital for investment and compiled a portfolio of films in search of funding. In addi-

tion, the Small and Medium Business Administration and the Korean Film Council (KOFIC) increased their leverage by deciding which films to provide public funds for and by attracting private funds. Today, the audio-visual investment fund's role is growing as it brings in not only finance capital, but also funds from distributors and public funds. As of 2004, about 31.5 per cent of filmmaking was funded by distributors, 29.6 per cent from the investment funds and the rest from other investors including the production companies themselves.

The Outlook of the Korean Film Industry and the New Media Environment

The success of Korean films after 2000 was achieved by industrial institutions and distinguished leaders, who stood at the center of changes brought about by the abolition of censorship and the transition to free competition in the marketplace. The Korean cinema's share of the box-office has grown rapidly at an annual rate of 20 per cent for the past five years. Today, it exceeds 50 per cent of the total, and exports to overseas markets are increasing dramatically. The Korean film industry currently makes from eighty to one hundred feature films per year and the number of film companies has reached about three thousand. Film companies are increasingly entering the equity market through mergers and acquisitions or stock exchange launches together with entertainment companies or even manufacturing companies. Now they must strengthen their fundamentals by making a long-term, stable and rational structure.

The Korean film industry faces challenges it must resolve, such as the oligopoly of major investment distributors, soaring production costs and the unequal allocation of funds. It must secure a rational filmmaking system and transparency, and it must diversify the profit structure. In addition, it needs to fight piracy. Wireless carriers' entry on the back of the convergence of broadcasting and communications as well as the emergence of new media such as DMB (Digital Multimedia Broad-

casting) and IP-TV (Internet Protocol TV) all pose another threat. The Korean film industry has passed the time when it was affected only by its own internal conditions. It is in a wider network, composed of the entire entertainment industry, information and communication, the internet industry, and collaboration with manufacturing companies.

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